

**THE ARAB REVOLT OF 1936-1939
IN PALESTINE**

A STUDY BASED ON ORAL SOURCES

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**'Submitted by SONIA FATHI EL-NIMR
to the University of Exeter
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(Signed)..... 

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THE ARAB REVOLT OF 1936-1939 IN PALESTINE

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Palestinian society suffered greatly from the process of establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine, which was approved and facilitated by British governments both in London and Palestine.

The Palestinian Arabs resisted the establishment of a Jewish home in their land from the outset. A Palestinian national movement led by the traditional urban elite families, led the resistance which was until the mid-thirties mainly verbal consisting of a series of protests. There were, however, many uprisings in the twenties and early thirties. Some were violent like that of 1929. However, in the mid-thirties the first organised grass-roots armed struggle started with the Qassam movement (in 1935). This marked the beginning of a long and bloody struggle.

The revolt of 1936-39 started with a six month general strike. This was the climax of an economic, political and social conflict between the Palestinian Arabs on the one hand and the British and the Zionists on the other. The rebel forces which consisted of an overwhelming majority of peasants launched a guerrilla warfare against the British forces and installations, and against the Zionist settlements. In the process, they developed their tactical, administrative and logistical organisation. Having common national, political and economic objectives, the revolt succeeded in mobilising public support, and was also aided by the exiled political leadership of the national movement.

The revolt reached the peak of its power in the Summer of 1938, when the rebels were practically in control over almost all of the countryside, and occupied a number of towns including Jerusalem. The British practically had to reoccupy Palestine from the hands of the rebels.

The British forces aided by a large number of reinforcements, and Jewish armed forces, used brutal force including the use of planes to stop the revolt. With the Second World War closing in, the British in 1939 combined the use of force with diplomatic efforts. As a result of the latter, the White Paper was published. The Palestinians interpreted this as the British conceding to their demands. The White Paper promised independence within ten years, limitation on Jewish immigration and on land sales. However, these promises were never realised.

The Palestinian Arab revolt came to an end in 1939 as the Second World War started.

PREFACE

Despite the fact that the revolt of 1936-39 in Palestine did not succeed in stopping the process of building the Jewish state in Palestine, nor in stopping the British from supporting it, the revolt is nonetheless, regarded by the Palestinians as the first organised armed resistance in their modern history. It is remembered for being the first grass-roots movement which achieved the longest commercial general strike in the history of the Middle East, and succeeded in participating the majority of the Palestinian Arab population, and obliged the British in the summer of 1938 to re-occupy most of Palestine from the hands of the rebels.

Today, in the third year of the Intifada against Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, one can hear the older generation of Palestinians drawing comparisons with revolt of 1936-39 during the British Mandate. "It is the same" say those who witnessed the revolt. "The people defied the authorities and took matters into their own hands". Comparisons are made between the National Committees of the Thirties and the Popular Committees of the Eighties, civil disobedience then and now, the rebel courts, the role of the Shabab (the young men), and even the use of pseudonym for their groups and leaders.

However, despite the older generation's enthusiasm for finding similarities between the revolt and the Intifada, the younger generation believes the differences between the two to be more significant, especially on the ideological and organisational levels. Nevertheless,

what is evident is that for both the older and younger generations, the revolt of 1936-39 is still a vilol memory.

Although abundant research has been done on the history of Palestine during the British Mandate, including the period of the revolt of 1936-39, very little has focussed on the role of the Palestinian peasants in the political struggle and in particular in the revolt itself.

Many of the prevailing accounts on Palestinian history which discuss the revolt, tend to denigrate and marginalise the peasants as being traditional, backward and conservative as Budeiri puts it, or too isolated, ignorant and poor according to Ann Lesch, to play a significant role in the national movement. Others describe them as a fragmented and disunited mass, whose various sections had different aims, and confronted different sets of problems according to Bowden. As for the rebels themselves - the overwhelming majority of whom were peasants - these accounts portray them as bands devoid of any ideology which might have influenced their actions, and who put their personal interests first, and those of the population at large last as Porath puts it. Even the accounts of some of the Palestinian historians who witnessed or participated in the events themselves, such as Akram Zueiter, Izzat Darwazah and Emil al-Ghoury, tend to portray the rebels as being a military tool in the hands of the elite leadership.

The Palestinian peasants were portrayed in these accounts as lacking any common political, national or social objectives to bind them together in a coherent movement, and unable to formalise an organisational frame-work through which they could express their own interests independently of the urban elites. However, what is lacking in the above, and other accounts of the revolt of 1936-39, are the voices and views of the rebels themselves.

It is this alternative "grass roots" perspective which this thesis aims to provide. It attempts to study the mechanisms of the revolt from a

"close-up" view; looking at the military, administrative and logistical organisation of the revolt, its tactics and battles, successes and failures. It also discusses the role of the peasants in the revolt, their motivations, social structure, political interrelations, alliances and forms of mobilisation.

For this purpose the accounts and recollections of some of the rebels were used in most sections of this research. The oral accounts of these rebels and peasants reveal that their role in the revolt was more important and significant than has been indicated previously. The oral accounts also give a more detailed picture of some of the events, and provide a "close-up" look at the revolt from the inside. Archival material has been used in this research to a much lesser extent, mainly because many studies have been made and published which depended on archival material, and because it is hoped that this research would be telling the inside untold stories of the period depending on the oral recollections.

The First chapter, discusses the impact of the Zionist settler colonisation on Palestine in the twenty years prior to the revolt, concentrating on the economic effects of the infra-structural development of the Jewish state. It will be shown that the influx of Jewish immigration into the country disrupted the balance of demographic growth; that the Jewish purchase of agricultural land created a large number of landless Arab peasants, and that the growth of Jewish industry posed a serious threat to the indigenous Arab industry, thus seriously threatening the Palestinian Arab economy and helping to fuel the Palestinian Arab revolt.

The Second chapter deals with the emergence of the Palestinian national movement, led by families of urban notables. The rivalry and competition between these families for political and social power will be discussed. This led to the emergence of a faction strongly opposed to partition plan of 1937 and the establishment of a Zionist state; and a rival

moderate opposition, willing to accept the partition plan, and compromise. The political leadership was thus divided into two factions which formed political parties led by the same families. This chapter also discussed how the failure of the political leadership to articulate a coherent policy, develop a strategy, or take practical steps against the Zionist colonisation led to the emergence of alternative, more radical movements.

The Third chapter discusses the movement of Izz al-Din al-Qassam, which adopted a more radical policy of armed struggle. The ideology of this movement was a combination of religious and nationalist thought. It was the first grass-roots movement, comprising mainly peasants and workers, some of whom would play a very important part in leading the revolt which began less than a year after the death of al-Qassam in November 1935 in a clash with the British forces.

Chapter Four is a chronological account of the main events of the revolt, from its beginning in the six months strike, to its end at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. It discusses the background to the revolt, the formation of the rebel groups, their main battles and the effect of al-Qawuqji on the development of the military skills of the rebels groups. It also discusses the Royal Commission's Report and the partition plan suggested by it, which led to the continuation and intensification of the revolt, which reached its peak in the summer of 1938. At which point the rebels were practically in control of most of the country.

Chapter Five deals in detail with the military organisation of the revolt, and tries to answer questions as to the form and level of the organisation of the rebel groups, and the role of the Faz'a (auxiliary forces); how the rebels conducted their guerrilla warfare and how they developed their tactics and fighting skills. It also discusses the formation of the Bureau of The Arab Revolt, which was to take command of the operational and administrative leadership of the rebel groups.

Chapter Six deals with the logistical side of the revolt; such as where the rebels obtained their arms and how they smuggled them through the borders; how they received their supplies of food, finance and medical aide, the type of communications system they operated, how the revolt developed its own intelligence network, and produced its own laws and legislations. Finally how the rebels formed and operated the rebels counts, will also be discussed.

Chapter Seven discusses the social and political structures of the rebels forces. It also looks at the geographical origins of the rebels, the basis for the formation of their alliances, and how the class conflict manifested itself in the rebels' communiques and actions.

Chapter Eight discusses the factors which ended the revolt. How the outbreak of the Second World War increased British resolve to crush the revolt militarily aided by the Jewish forces. It also looks at the diplomatic and political maneuvers used by the British to end the revolt, and discusses the role played by the peace bands formed by the opposition. The internal problems within the ranks of the rebels themselves, which helped to weaken the revolt structurally, focus the concluding discussion of this chapter.

Chapters 1,2 and 4 provide an essential historical and chronological background to the thesis, based mainly on the publications of European and Palestinian historians of the period. Chapters 5,6 and 7 which, deal with the military organisation, logistics and social and political structures of the rebel forces, as well as some sections of chapter 3 and 8, depend mainly on the oral accounts of rebels who witnessed or participated in the revolt first-hand. This data was collected during research in historic Palestine (Palestine before 1948 - now Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip). Seventy one interviews were made in the period between January 1984 and June 1985. The Palestinian informants interviewed for this research fell into three categories: Firstly, those who fought in the revolt

whether full time, or as Faz'a (auxiliary) rebels; secondly, eye-witnesses to some of the events; and thirdly, immediate relatives of some of the rebels leaders. Most of the interviewees were villagers who still live in the villages. Only nine of all of the interviewees were urban-based. Most of those interviewed were from the Galilee and the areas of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm where rebels operations had been most intensive.

To check the reliability of the informants I combined three methods: Firstly, by collecting information about the informant beforehand, for example, whether he indeed participated in the events about which I interviewed him, and whether or not he was known to lie or exaggerate; secondly, to interview more than one individual in the same village or area about the same events, and allowing each of the interviewees to know that the same interview had been made or was intended to be made with others in the village or area in question; thirdly, letting the informant feel that the researcher knew about the events under consideration and that the information given would be cross-referenced. It was found that then most of the stories were cross-referenced with written accounts, or told by other persons in other areas, the informants were truthful, although there was some exaggeration in them.

The information I collected via oral history can be categorised into three types. The First are those stories and information relating to events which are already documented, such as battles, sabotage operations, attacks on police stations etc. Second, are those stories which relate to events also documented, but which add more details to the documented evidence such as rebels court cases, preparations for battles. For example, the details of the preparations by al-Qassam movement to take to the mountains, the incidents which took place before they reached Ya'bad and how the clash itself took place. Third, are the stories and detailed information not previously documented, such as that relating to

the preparation and launching of the operations by some of the peace bands, detailed information on the acquisition and smuggling of arms, and information about some of the rebels leaders.

In addition to that, twelve British ex-Palestine Police Officers were interviewed in the spring and summer of 1983. Although not adding new information to the written accounts of the period, they did however provide some interesting details, and more importantly their own personal views as well.

During the collection of the oral data I was confronted with some difficulties. One was to find witnesses of that period who were still a live. Another problem was to convince some of the informants to give interviews, especially those who live under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, who were hesitant to talk about military operations, especially those against Jewish settlements. A third problem was to convince women to talk about their own experience during the revolt. Out of seventy one interviews only four where of women were willing to talk. In Silat al-Zahir village near Nablus, a woman who had actually fought in the revolt and was a member of the rebels group, refused to be interviewed, saying that what she did during the revolt was nothing compared to what the men did. (Therefore, she advised to interview men). In another incident a man from Qabatiya near Jenin refused to be interviewed by me because I was from the same area, and he feared that if I told the information he would give me, this would open old wounds between the different factions which were rivals during the revolt.

The importance of the oral data does not only come from the fact that it added a wealth of detail to the documented accounts, or included new information, but that it also represents the point of view of the rebels themselves, and how they at the present day remember the past. This helps to shed new light on the period of the revolt.

Being stateless people, the oral history and collective memory are of special significance to the Palestinians, or means by which they were able during 42 years after the destruction of their economic, social and political structures to retain and preserve their identity, culture and history. Through oral history they are able to compensate for the lack of official institutions to document their own history and preserve it. Especially as the official history of Palestine was written by its colonisers, which ignored the voice of the Palestinians themselves. As David Henige puts it " History like the Third World, needed to be decolonised, to be rescued from the tyranny of official documentation, to be allowed to study all facts of the past" (New York 1982), this could not be more true than in the case of the Palestinians.

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

I used a simplified transliteration in the text and complete classical transliteration in the Bibliography.

CHAPTER ONE

The Impact of the Zionist Settler Colonisation on Palestine during the 1920's and 1930's

Studying the economic, social and political structures and processes in Palestine during 1920's and 1930's poses many serious problems for the historian. This is, firstly, because of the complexity of factors which were interacting together and affecting the economic development and social changes in the country. Secondly, the Jewish national home project, and the special terms of the Mandate on Palestine, created a unique situation, which is difficult to analyze in the same terms as for other mandated Arab countries, or other British colonies.

In Palestine there were three forces which were determining its economic development, and social and political changes: the Palestinian Arabs, the British Mandate government and the Jewish community. These three forces were not working separately, nor, as it might seem, were the British mandate government maintaining separate relations

with each of the other two. But these three forces were interacting through a complex network of interrelations.

From the outset, since the mandate came into operation in Palestine in September 1923, the successive mandate governments were confronted with significant contradictions in the practice of their policies and in their economic measures. Firstly, the mandate governments were responsible under the provisions of the mandate "for placing the country under political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National home..."¹, and they were responsible to "facilitate the Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage in co-operation with the Jewish Agency... close settlements by Jews on the land, including state lands and wastelands not required for public purposes."² Secondly, by executing these promises, the mandate governments faced the hostility of the indigenous Arab population of the country, whose economy was affected and promised independence was threatened by the Jewish National home project. The third contradiction was that these mandate governments had to balance Britain's own interests as a colonial power in the country with the contradictory interests of the Arabs and Jews.

This chapter will discuss the impact of building the Jewish national home on Arab society in Palestine especially on its economy, and how the capitalist Jewish sector of the Palestine economy came to dominate that of the pre-capitalist Arab sector.

1 Article 2 of the mandate for Palestine, reprinted from a Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, London, 1947. p.76

2 Ibid. p.76

Socio-Economic Developments in Palestine During the Second Half of the 19th Century:

The total land area of Palestine is 26,300,000 dunums or about 6,500,000 acres,³ of which nearly nine million dunums were cultivable. The cultivable lands were confined to the coastal and inland plains, Before 1948, most of the Jewish settlements were to be found on the latter and along the coastal plains from Haifa to Jaffa. Of the uncultivable area, nearly eleven million dunums were desert lands to the South of Beersheba and the remaining six million dunums consist primary of hills and forest areas.⁴

Palestine was predominantly an agricultural country. Up to the 1860's practically all land in Palestine was held commonly under the musha' system; the rest was under individual ownership in the hills and close proximity of towns.⁵ Under the musha' system the land which was held in common by the village was divided among the clans of the village who in turn assigned certain proportions of lands to individual families for tillage. This proportion of land was usually subject to redistribution at fixed intervals of time.⁶ The two forms of land tenure, individual and musha', were not equally widespread in Palestine. In the plains the musha' had almost always been the rule, while in the hilly regions individual ownership was predominant.⁷

3 O. Gass, R. Nathan and D. Creamer, Palestine; Problem and Promise, Washington, 1949, p.184.

4 Said Hamadeh, Economic Organisation of Palestine, Beirut, 1938, p.206.

5 Avraham Granott, The Land System in Palestine, London, 1952, p.179

6 George E. Post, "Essays on the Sects of Nationalists of Syria", Palestine Exploration Fund, 1891, p.105

7 Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus 1920-1948" in Roger Owen (ed.) Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine, London, 1982, p.108

The main agricultural export products were wheat, barley, sesame, olive oil and olive oil soap and other fruits and vegetables. The main importers were France, Egypt, England, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy and Malta.⁸ Only a small part of the profits of the agricultural exports went to their actual producers, that is the peasants, as most was taken by merchants, middlemen, big landlords and tax-farmers, and a large part of these profits went to the government.⁹ As the profits of agricultural exports increased, so did the possibilities of increasing the cultivable area; and for this purpose the Ottoman Government issued a series of laws in 1858, and the 1870's. Of these laws the Land Code of 1858 was the most significant, especially affecting the peasants. Under this law the Government imposed individual registration of all possessory titles to the lands, extension of the right of inheritance and, as a result, the breaking up of all forms of communal ownership. By doing this, the Ottoman Government hoped to profit from the fees for issuing documents of registration, from disposal of state lands (for tillage in return for the tithe tax) and from the fact that it will be able to force each person holding a title deed to pay the required tax.¹⁰ In addition, the Government hoped by increasing the cultivable lands to increase its revenue from agricultural exports.

Many peasants, were unable to secure documents for themselves, afraid of the consequences of fiscal demands, afraid of being drafted into the army and they also needed protection by powerful men from the oppression of the tax officials, soldiers and money-lenders. These circumstances obliged them to register the lands they cultivated in the

8 Alexander Scholch, "European Penetration and Economic Development of Palestine 1856-82" in Roger Owen (ed.) *Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine*. p.13

9 Ibid. p.19

10 Abd al-Aziz 'Awad, al-Idarah al-'Uthmanyiah Fi Wilayat Suria, Cairo, 1969, p. 233

names of powerful families.¹¹ Thus thousands of dunums were registered in the names of big landlords and large tracts of lands in musha' became registered as individual property.

To use the land code to its fullest extent, the Government decided that taxes would no longer be paid in kind but only in cash, which was a staggering blow to the peasants, who, being unable to provide the cash, had to get loans from big land owners or money-lenders, often at very high interest rates - forty or fifty per cent a year.¹² If the peasants failed to pay the loans and the interest back, they often lost their land and were forced to become tenants. Many peasants in Palestine lost their land in this way.¹³

In 1867 another law was issued which also had a significant effect on land ownership in Palestine. This law granted foreigners (non-Ottomans) the right to own landed property in Palestine.¹⁴ This has introduced a new form of land ownership, absentee Land-lordism. Large estates of lands were sold to non-Palestinian Arabs, and to Europeans. Of these, two cases are important to mention. The first was the sale by the government of the lands of seventeen villages in Marj Ibn-'Amir (near Nazareth) to some Lebanese businessmen in 1869, and the sale by the Ottoman Sultan of the lands of further five villages in the same area to the same persons in 1872.¹⁵ The new owners employed the peasants as tenants and engaged local managers and agents. The Sursugs' (who became the major

11 Nabil Badran, "al-Rif al-Filastini Qabl al-Harb al-Alamyiah al-Ula". Shu'un Filastinyiah. vol. 6/7, No. 7. p. 124. and C.T. Wilson, Peasant Life in the Holy Land, London, 1906, p. 293

12 R. Tamimi and M. Bahjat, Wilayat Beirut. Beirut, 1914, p.105.

13 Avraham Granott, The Land System in Palestine. p.60

14 G. Fisher, Ottoman Laws. London, 1919, p.14

15 Nevil Barbour and D. Warriner, Nisi Dominus, Beirut, 1969, pp. 117-8.

proprietors in this area) became the peasants landlords, and money-lenders as well as protectors.¹⁶ The second case of significance was the sale of the lands of Abu-Shusha village South east of Ramleh, to Melville Bergheim, a Jewish banker, merchant and factory owner. The land was sold for the amount of tax arrears owed by the inhabitants of Abu-Shusha. The peasants remained on the land and worked it as tenants and tilled it according to the musha' system. The Bergheims managed the lands themselves.¹⁷

The three major groups or types of big landlords in Palestine towards the end of the nineteenth century were the local Palestinian notable families, who expanded their properties by the registration of the peasants lands in their own names after the Ottoman land laws. The second type was the newly and slowly emerging commercial bourgeoisie of the coastal towns and of Jerusalem consisting mainly of local and Lebanese Christians, Jews and Europeans.¹⁸ The third type was that of the colonialist settlers mainly German and Jews, who acquired lands for the purpose of settling in Palestine. After 1882 the Jews were the main and most important category of settlers.

By the end of the 1870s, merchant and banking capital had already begun to penetrate into the Palestinian countryside.¹⁹ The breaking up of communal land ownership, the changing of tax laws, the increasing demand for agricultural products in Europe, led to the emergence of a powerful local bourgeoisie in the urban centers. The political and social power of the rural sheikhs was shifting from rural areas to the urban elites. The rural areas lost their autonomy and the rural Sheikhs (whose status came from the fact that they were tax-farmers) were losing their

16 Alexander Scholch, "European penetration". p.24

17 Ibid. p.25

18 Ibid, p.23

19 Ibid, p.23

political and social power to the urban elites who became the mediators between the peasants and the Government. These elites assumed the political leadership of the population.

The economic and social situation in the last few decades of the Ottoman rule remained almost the same until the end of the First World War, which brought dramatic changes to the country with the British occupation and later the Mandate, and the British promise of establishing a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

Demographic changes during 1920's and 1930's:

In 1919 the population of Palestine was 647,850 the overwhelming majority (515,000) being Muslim Arabs.²⁰ Most of these lived in rural areas and depended on agriculture for living. There were 62,500 Christian Arabs,²¹ who lived mostly in towns and depended on Commerce, industries and other occupations as well as on agriculture.²² There were 65,300, Jews, the majority of whom lived in the towns of Jerusalem, Safad, Tiberias, and Hebron.²³

The Balfour Declaration of the 2nd November 1917 had opened wide the doors of Palestine to Jewish immigration after the end of the First World War. In 1919 the number of Jews entering the country was 1,806, and in 1920 the number had risen to 8,223. ²⁴ As detailed in Table I, the years 1924-26 witnessed a large increase in the number of Jews migrating into Palestine. For example in 1925, 33,801 entered the country. This was

20 The Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry for Palestine, London, 1937, p. 114.

21 Ibid, p.114

22 Said Hamadeh. Economic Organisation of Palestine. p.34

23 The Report of the Royal Commission. p.114

24 Y. Porath, The Emergence of the Palestinian National Movement, London, 1974, p.17

due to increased Zionist propaganda in the wake of the Balfour Declaration plus the economic crisis in Europe.²⁵ Other contributing factors were new Legislation in Poland which affected the Jews (from 1919 and 1936 Polish Jews represented 42.8 % of all Jewish immigrants who entered Palestine),²⁶ and the United States policy of immigration quota on the basis of the countries of origin, which excluded Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.²⁷ The flood of immigrants in 1925-1926 was concentrated mainly in the cities and Jewish settlements. In the settlements the immigrants were absorbed by the growing citrus industry, while in the cities many of them turned to small scale commerce and building.²⁸

In the years 1927-1929 the number of immigrants declined due to the world economic crisis, causing the numbers of Jews leaving the country to exceed the number entering. For example in 1927, 2,713, entered while 5,071 left, nearly twice as many.²⁹ Between the years 1929-31 the average rate of immigration was about 5,000 people a year. However, as seen in Table 1, the rate between 1932 and 1936 was rising sharply, while in 1931 the number of immigrants was 4,075 for example, the number in 1933 rose to 30,327 and it peaked in 1935 when 61,844 immigrants entered the country. Apart from the authorized number of immigrants there was a considerable volume of illegal immigration. This reached its peak in 1933 and it was estimated that the two years of 1932-33 the number of unauthorised settlers who entered the country was

25 Nakhleh and Zureik, (eds.) The Sociology of the Palestinians, London, 1980 p.17

26 Said Hamadeh, *The Economic Organisation of Palestine*. p.25

27 Y. Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian National Movement*. p.17

28 Ibid. pp. 17-8

29 Said Hamadeh, *The Economic Organisation of Palestine*. p.24

22,400.³⁰

It was estimated that between 1922 and 1936 the population of Palestine expanded from 752,048 to 1,336,578 representing an increase of 78%. In absolute figures the population excluding the Jews increased by 297,777 slightly more than the increase of the Jewish population, which was 286,698. On the other hand, while the Muslim and Christian Arab population increased by 49% and 44% respectively, the Jewish population increased by no less than 343%.³¹ The total population of the Country increased by 35% during the fourteen years period between 1922-1936 by immigration alone.³²

The years 1922 to 1936 witnessed also a migration from the rural areas to the urban centers among the Arab population of Palestine. The urban proportion of the Muslim population increased from 23.5% in 1922 to 26.9% in 1935. The Christian proportion also increased, from 75.4% in 1922 to 78.8% in 1935.³³ As a result of land sales, many of the Arab peasants became landless and sought to find alternative means of livelihood in the towns, particularly the ports of Jaffa and Haifa.³⁴ In contrast to the increasing urbanisation of the Arab population, the Jewish population was decreasing in the towns. While in 1922, 81.9% of the Jews in Palestine were to be found in towns, this proportion had declined to 73% in 1935.³⁵ The reason for this decline was also land purchase. As the Jews purchased more lands particularly in the

30 A Report of the Mandatory Power to the League of Nations, London, 1933. p.15

31 Government of Palestine Information Department, London, 1937, p.32

32 Said Hamadeh, The Economic Organisation of Palestine. p.119

33 Ibid, p.13

34 Nevil Barbour and D. Warriner, Nisi Dominus. p.123.

35 Said Hamadeh, The Economic Organisation of Palestine. p.119

TABLE I

Actual Figures of Legal Immigrants from 1920 - 1937

| Year | Number |
|------|--------|
| 1920 | 5,514 |
| 1921 | 9,149 |
| 1922 | 7,844 |
| 1923 | 7,421 |
| 1924 | 12,856 |
| 1925 | 33,801 |
| 1926 | 13,081 |
| 1927 | 2,713 |
| 1928 | 2,178 |
| 1929 | 5,249 |
| 1930 | 4,944 |
| 1931 | 4,075 |
| 1932 | 9,553 |
| 1933 | 30,327 |
| 1934 | 42,359 |
| 1935 | 61,844 |
| 1936 | 29,727 |
| 1937 | 10,536 |

Source: N. Barbour and D. Warriner, *Nisi Dominus*. p.155

cultivable areas, especially on the coastal and inland plains, they began to settle in agricultural settlements. The increase of the Jewish agricultural settlements on the coastal plains, was one of the main reasons which drove the Arab inhabitants of Galilee to Revolt in 1936-39. These settlements were also seen as a threat by Palestinian Arabs, and they were the target of many of the attacks by the rebels during the revolt. As large number of Arab landless peasants were forced to find jobs away from farming in the urban centers, more numbers of Jews were turning to farming.

The demographic impact of Zionist Settler Colonisation was twofold. First it generated an increase of population as a result of Jewish immigration, which could be beyond the capacity of the country to absorb. As will be discussed below, unemployment among the Arab population had risen to high levels. Secondly, it accelerated the migration of Arabs from rural areas to the towns as a result of land purchase, which resulted in an increase in the Arab population and the creation of an Arab unskilled labour class.

The Arab population was alarmed by the increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants, and was aware of the danger this posed to their economy. In every uprising or a wave of mass protest and in every meeting with the High Commissioner the question of Jewish immigration was raised, and it was the first among the demands of the Palestinian Arab National Movement. It was also one of the main reasons behind the six month strike in 1936, and the revolt of 1936-39.

The problem of Jewish immigration was reflected in the reports of the various Commissions of Inquiry which visited Palestine after each wave of violent protests by the Arabs against the Jewish immigration and land sales. For example following the 1920 and 1921 uprisings the report of the Commission of Inquiry headed by Sir Thomas Haycraft stated that:

"The Arabs regard Jewish immigration not only as ultimate means of Arab Political and economic subjection, but also as an immediate cause of Arab unemployment."³⁶

Land Purchase During the 1920's and 1930's:

The Zionist purchase of Arab lands in Palestine started in the Nineteenth Century on a small scale, but it had increased considerably during the mandate period owing to the Balfour Declaration and the facilitation provided by the mandate power. By the end of 1882, 22,000 dunums of land, mostly in rural areas, was in Jewish possession, and at the outbreak of the First World War 418,000 dunums was owned by the Jews.³⁷ By the end of 1920 the Jews owned about 650,000 dunums of land in Palestine.³⁸

Most of lands purchased during the 1920's and 1930's was cultivable land. In 1930 for example, the Jewish Agency owned 58 settlements with a land area of 144,224 dunums and out of this total 130,190 dunums were cultivable lands, of which 122,003 actually under cultivation.³⁹ [in 1945 the Jews owned a total of 1,588,356 dunums out of which 1,176,645, dunums was cultivable land. This represents 24% of all cultivable land area in Palestine]⁴⁰ As detailed in Table 2, during the 1920's and 1930's the Jewish land purchase in Palestine was concentrated mainly in the coastal plain, especially during the 1930's. Of the total of 181,497 dunums purchased between 1930 and 1935 for example, 111,988 dunums or about 61.6% was purchased along the coastal plain. This concentration of

36 Report of Haycraft Commission, as quoted in Government of Palestine, Survey of Palestine, London, 1946, p.9

37 Immigration and Settlement, Israel Pocket Library, Jerusalem, 1973. p.105

38 R. Nathan, O. Gass and D. Creamer, Palestine, Problem and Promise. p.184

39 Encyclopaedia Palestina. 1984, vol. 1, p.172

40 Ibid. vol. 1, p.173

Jewish purchase in this area was due to two factors. The first was that this area was one of the most fertile and productive areas in Palestine especially the citrus groves in the Jaffa and Tulkarm areas. These areas represented a good investment and sites for agricultural settlements. [the total coastal plain area is 2,928,300 dunums, 79% of which is cultivable land].⁴¹ The second reason was the availability of some of these lands for sale. Big tracts of lands in this area were owned by absentee landlords or local big land owners, many of whom treated the land as a commodity and were ready to sell it for good prices.

As detailed in Table 3, it can be noted that the area of land in Palestine sold by absentee landlords was greater than those sold by local landlords and the peasants. For example between the years 1920 and 1922, 75.4% of the lands purchased by the Jews were sold by absentee landlords and only 3.8% by peasants. Between 1923 and 1927, 86% was purchased from absentee landlords and only 1.6% from peasants. During the whole period between 1878 and 1936, 52.6% of the total land purchased by the Jews was sold by absentee landlords and 9.4% was sold by peasants.

It is important to note that the state has also provided another source for the Jewish land purchase in Palestine. It was estimated that the total area of state domains amounted to 1,263,497 dunums ⁴², (including all the Jordan valley including the lands of Beisan and Tiberias), as well as large stretches in South of Palestine (the Negev), the hill areas and the sandy stretches along the sea coast. ⁴³ The mandate Governments were responsible under the provisions of the mandate to facilitate Jewish

41 Kenneth W. Stein, The Land Question in Palestine, London, 1984, p.4

42 Said Hamadeh, The Economic Organisation of Palestine. p.87

43 Sir John Hope Simpson, A Report on Immigration, London, 1930, pp. 172-3

Settlement on state lands. ⁴⁴ As noted in Table 2, the Jordan Valley represented 17.7% of the land purchased by the Jews during the years between 1930 and 1935, Beersheba (Negev) represented 7.7% of the total lands purchased during the same period. The occupation of agricultural lands by the Zionist settlers, often resulted in the displacement of the Arab peasants who were inhabiting or working these lands. An example is, the case of Marj Ibn-Amir lands which became the property of Lebanese businessmen in the nineteenth century. These lands were sold to the Jews and the transfer took place between 1920 and 1925. During these dates there were 8000 Arab tenants on these lands inhabiting twenty two villages but when the transfer of the lands was completed, twenty one of these villages were evacuated and their inhabitants were evicted.⁴⁵ Another 700 tenants were evicted following the purchase of lands in the Haifa-Acre coastal area and the Qusqus - Tab'un areas in the 1920's and the subsequent establishment of 23 Jewish Settlements on these lands. ⁴⁶ A further 1500 Arab tenants were evicted upon the purchase of 33,000 dunums in Wadi al-Hawarith. ⁴⁷ In his report on immigration, land settlements and development, in 1930, Sir John Hope Simpson pointed out that "... of 86,980 rural Arab families in villages ... 29.4% are landless".⁴⁸ The figure 29.4% was high, considering that more than a half of the Arab population depended on agriculture for a living. In 1931, 411,621 out of 759,712 Muslim Arabs depended on agriculture, and 16,176 out of 91,398 Christian Arabs depended on

44 Article 6, the Terms of the Mandate

45 Nevil Barbour and D. Wanniner, *Nisi Dominus*. pp.117-8.

46 Y. Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian National Movement*. p.88

47 Sabir Musa " Nizam Mulkiyyat al-Arabi Fi Filastin Fi Awakhir al-'Ahd al-'Uthmani" Shu'un Filastiniyah, No. 95 (October 1979), p.58

48 Sir John Hope Simpson, *Report on Immigration*. p.142

TABLE 2

Jewish Land Purchase by Region, 1930 April to 1935 (in Dunums)

| Region | 1930 | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | Total | % |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Coastal | | | | | | | | |
| Plain | 16,894 | 14,440 | 14,197 | 14,436 | 44,427 | 7,595 | 111,988 | 61.6 |
| Jaffa | 4,538 | 4,736 | 2,460 | 9,149 | 7,166 | 4,145 | 32,194 | 17.7 |
| Gaza | ,116 | 4,628 | ,050 | 1,473 | 3,813 | ,380 | 10,460 | 5.7 |
| Haifa | 1,733 | ,168 | ,103* | 1,119 | 22,810 | 2,333 | 28,057 | 15.4 |
| Acre | ,115 | ----- | ,170* | ,021 | 8,115 | ,195 | 8,276 | 4.6 |
| Tulkarm | 10,392 | ----- | 4,911 | 11,959 | 2,674 | 2,523 | 33,001 | 18.2 |
| Jezreel | ,573 | ,764 | 2,830 | 8,691 | 1,860 | 3,523 | 18,241 | 10.0 |
| Nazareth | ,573 | ,754 | 2,141 | 8,058 | 1,860 | 3,376 | 16,762 | 9.2 |
| Jenin | ----- | ,010 | ,689 | ,633 | ----- | ,147 | 1,479 | 0.8 |
| Jordan | | | | | | | | |
| Valley | 1,089 | 2,823 | 1,722 | 8,894 | 10,354 | 7,701 | 32,187 | 17.7 |
| Beisan | ,353 | 1,972 | 1,712 | 5,233 | 5,649 | 7,540 | 22,459 | 12.4 |
| Tiberias | ,736 | ,851 | ,010 | 3,265 | 4,705 | ,161 | 9,728 | 5.3 |
| Mountainous | | | | | | | | |
| Area | ,810 | ,550 | ,145 | ,314 | 1,871 | 1,618 | 5,298 | 3.0 |
| Safad | ,730 | ,097 | ----- | ,014 | ,044 | ,152 | 1,037 | 0.6 |
| Nablus | ----- | ,289 | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ,289 | 0.2 |
| Jerusalem | ,080 | ,164 | ,145 | ,300 | 1,503 | ,779 | 2,971 | 1.6 |
| Hebron | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ,324 | ,677 | 1,001 | 0.6 |
| Beersheba (Negev) | ----- | ,008 | ----- | 5,053 | 3,602 | 5,120 | 13,383 | 7.7 |
| Total | 19,366 | 18,585 | 18,893 | 36,992 | 62,114 | 25,547 | 181,497 | 100.0 |

* In these regions the total amount of land sold by Jewish exceeded the amount purchased by them.

Source: Y. Porath, The Palestinian National Movement. London, 1977, p.85

agriculture. ⁴⁹

Palestinian peasants were under three sets of pressures. On the one hand they faced the threat of being evicted from the lands they cultivated as a result of land sales, on the other hand they were indebted to the landowners, money lenders and city merchants. Moreover, the mandate government burdened them even further with heavy direct and indirect taxes, and even those who escaped the fate of being evicted from their lands could not escape the ruinous results of the economic pressures. For example, the government lifted the duty on the import of olive oil and sesame seeds, affecting the local production which suffered considerably as a result, as olive oil and sesame seeds and oil were the main export product of the Arab peasants in addition to the citrus production. ⁵⁰ Many of the peasants under such circumstances were not able to survive the pressures and some were forced to sell their lands. As seen in Table 3, the years in which the peasants sold more of their lands up to 1936 were during the periods of economic depression. Most of the peasants survived from season to season with difficulty, unless they obtained access to more lands or found off-farm work to supplement their agricultural income. Short-term seasonal day labour undertaken by peasants mostly to supplement their income without losing their base on the land. ⁵¹

The influx of Jewish immigration and the extensive land purchase had serious effects on land and agriculture in Palestine. First, the cultivable lands available to the Arab peasants was constantly decreasing because of Jewish land purchase, especially in the cultivable areas. It was

49 Said Hamadeh, *The Economic Organisation of Palestine*. p.34 and The Government of Palestine, General Monthly Bulletin of Current Statistics of Palestine, Jerusalem, September 1936, p.1.

50 Sir John Hope Simpson. *A report on Immigration*. p.178

51 Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus". p.144.

TABLE 3

Jewish Land Ownership, by Former Owners (in Dunums)

| Period of Purchase | Total of Purchase | Purchased from absentee Owners | | Purchased from big Palestinian Owners | | Purchased from Miscellaneous | | Purchased from the Peasants | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| | Dunums | Dunums | % | Dunums | % | Dunums | % | Dunums | % |
| 1878-1890 | 67,073 | ----- | ---- | 18,809 | 28.0 | 48,254 | 72.0 | ----- | ---- |
| 1891-1900 | 60,218 | 23,901 | 39.7 | 3,678 | 6.1 | 6,898 | 11.5 | 25,741 | 42.0 |
| 1901-1914 | 118,290 | 37,428 | 31.6 | 39,928 | 33.8 | 35,839 | 30.3 | 5,095 | 4.0 |
| 1920-1922 | 103,137 | 77,794 | 75.4 | 21,443 | 20.8 | ----- | ---- | 3,900 | 3.8 |
| 1923-1927 | 199,678 | 171,706 | 86.0 | 24,712 | 12.4 | ----- | ---- | 3,260 | 1.6 |
| 1928-1932 | 92,432 | 42,038 | 45.5 | 33,454 | 36.2 | ----- | ---- | 16,940 | 18.0 |
| 1933-1936 | 41,150 | 6,107 | 14.9 | 25,778 | 62.7 | ----- | ---- | 9,265 | 22.0 |
| Total | 681,978 | 358,974 | 52.6 | 167,802 | 24.6 | 91,001 | 13.4 | 64,201 | 9.4 |

Source: Avraham Granott, *Land System in Palestine*. p.277

estimated that an area of at least 180 dunums was required to maintain a peasant family at a decent standard of living on an unirrigated land. However, it was found that the whole cultivable land not already in the hands of the Jews would not have provided on average a lot more than 90 dunums for each family.⁵² Secondly, as a result of Jewish land purchase a class of landless Arabs was created and consequently an unskilled labour force flooded the towns, especially the ports of Jaffa and Haifa. Third, the competition between the Arab agricultural products produced by costly traditional methods and the Jewish Capitalist and mechanised production had made it difficult for Arab peasants to obtain adequate prices for their products, especially as the mandate governments were importing the same agricultural produce at lower prices.

It is not surprising therefore, that one of the most important reasons for the revolt of 1936-39 was to stop Arab land sales to the Jews.

Industry

Palestinian industry before the First World War was composed mainly of small agricultural industry and handicrafts.⁵³ The number of industries established before the First World War and were still operating in 1927 was 1236, of which 925 or 75% were Arab industries and 300 or 24% were Jewish. Except for a few large olive oil soap factories and some olive oil and sesame oil presses, the industries were mostly handicrafts.⁵⁴ It is true that a number of new Arab enterprises (529 estimated by

52 Sir John Hope Simpson, Report on Immigration. pp.142-3.

53 Said Hamadeh, The Economic Organisation of Palestine. p. 126

54 Ibid. p.221

Horowitz and Hinden for the years 1931-37) ⁵⁵, were established, particularly in Haifa and other coastal towns. However, with the exception of a few large factories, notably a metal works, a match factory and a rice mill, most of these enterprises were on a small scale, often in service or Commercial Centers.⁵⁶ In 1936 there were 6,000 enterprises in Palestine, of which 4,500 were handicrafts and 1,500 were industrial establishments. In the handicrafts enterprises, less than five persons including the owner were employed in each establishment.

The number of people dependent on industry for living shows a great contrast between the Arabs and Jews. In the census of 1931 it was listed that while 97 per thousand of Muslim Arabs and 252 per thousand Christian Arabs depend on industry, there were 289 persons per thousand of Jews dependent on industry. ⁵⁷ The total Capital invested in all industries was in excess of £P 10,000,000, and the number of workers employed exceeded 40,000. ⁵⁸ The number of Jewish enterprises established between 1920 and 1935 was 4,157 of which 1,246 were industrial establishments. The capital invested in these enterprises amounted to £P 8,116,000. ⁵⁹

In contrast to the Jewish industry, Arab industry was declining in Palestine. Arab industry could not compete with the Jewish developing industry, as it lacked the capital, the technical skills and the machinery. As the Royal Commission for Palestine concluded in its Report:

"It is evident that Arab industry cannot in the long run compete with the Jewish, where technical skill or the use of import raw material are needed. It seems to us inevitable that as the industrial enterprises and equipment

55 As quoted by Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus". p141

56 Ibid. p.141

57 Said Hamadeh, The Economic Organisation of Palestine. p.33

58 The Report Of Royal Commission. p.155

59 Ibid. p.155

of the national home expand, so Arab industries will decline".⁶⁰

With the use of the available capital, modern technology and technical skill as well as the aid and facilities of the mandate governments, Jewish industry managed to expand and develop. Between the years 1919 and 1939 the capital flow into Palestine was £P 129,000,000 of which £P 95,000,000 was Jewish. ⁶¹ The mandate government facilitated to a large extent the development of the Jewish industrial sector, and at the same time very little was done to help the Arab Sector to develop and expand. For example, regarding economic concessions offered by the mandate government, only one out of six major concessions made in 1939 and five in 1942 was given to Arabs, and this was a food importing agency. The rest, including The Palestine Electric Corporation, Palestine Salt Company, Palestine Potash and Sulphur Quarries, were exclusively in Jewish hands. In communication, Jewish interests managed to obtain concessions from the mandate government for setting up a modern transportation and road system. ⁶² In the building industry for example, the mandate government gave a Jewish Contractor the contract to build three government schools in Jaffa for the Arabs, knowing that the contractor had proposed to employ exclusively Jewish labour, when there were many unemployed Arab workers in Jaffa itself.⁶³

It was clear within these circumstances that Arab industries could not compete with that of the Jews. They lacked the flow of capital the Jews possessed, the technical skill, as well as the facilitation of the British

60 Ibid. p.91

61 O. Gass, R. Nathan and D. Geamer, Palestine, Problem and Promise. p.263.

62 Khalil Nakhleh and Elia Zureik (eds). The Sociology of the Palestinians. p.55

63 "The testimony of George Mansur, 16/1/1937", in The Political Testimonies to The Royal Commission, Damascus 1937. p.301.

Mandate government. The Arab soap industry for example, was competing with the highly mechanised and highly capitalised Shemen Oil and Soap Factory which was founded in 1922, near Haifa with a capital of £P 250,000. ⁶⁴ This factory in the late 1920's was one of the Jewish firms most successful in persuading the British Mandate authorities to lift import duty on olive oil and sesame. This advantage (which was a big blow for the olive oil and sesame production in the Arab sector), combined with economic scale resulting from the size of the enterprise had a ruinous effect on the Arab soap producing factories as it allowed Shemen to produce cheap lines of soap which was able to undersell Nablus Soap. ⁶⁵ The Arab Soap industry received a further blow in 1931 when the Egyptians imposed a high tariff on imported soap in order to protect their own soap industry.⁶⁶ As a result of all these pressures the Palestinian Arab soap industry was declining. For example, in 1929 there were 12 soap factories in Jaffa and by 1936 the number had dropped to only 4. ⁶⁷

Employment:

The large number of Jewish immigrants into the country also created competition for employment between Arab and Jewish workers. The number of Jewish workers registered in the Histadrut (the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the land of Israel), had increased by

64 Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus". p.14

65 Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus". p140 and Sir John Hope Simpson Report. The Immigration. p.113-4

66. The Report Of Royal Commission. p.91

67 "George Mansur Testimony, 16/1/1937". p.299

41,000 in only nine months, between the end of 1935 and the end of 1936.⁶⁸

The influx of Jewish immigrants and the fierce competition between them and the Arab workers on jobs led to the hardening of the Histadrut's attitude over the question of exclusive employment of Jewish workers in the Jewish enterprises, and in 1935 the Histadrut launched a campaign to exclude Arab workers from all Jewish enterprises.⁶⁹ As a result of this, large number of Arab workers were expelled from their work at Jewish enterprises. For example, in the four Jewish settlements of Mulabbes, Dinan, Wadi Hanin, and al-Khedira, there were 6214 Arab workers in February 1935, and as a result of the expulsion, this number was reduced to 2276 in August that year and to 677 in September 1936.⁷⁰ In other instances there were Jewish attacks on Arab labourers to force them to leave their work, as when an Arab contractor and his workers were attacked by Jews to force them off the site for a Jewish building in Haifa in 1934.⁷¹

The difference in wages between Arab and Jewish workers was also strikingly high, not only in private enterprises, but also in public works.⁷² Here, where the government paid an average wage for a 9 hour day to a skilled and semi-skilled Arab asphalt labourers in 1929, 160 mils while a Jewish labourer was paid 220 mils for the same work. Another example, is an Arab road labourer being paid 130 mils, while the Jewish were paid 160, or the Arab contractor paid 200 mils, and the Jewish paid 350 mils.⁷³ As estimated by the Royal Commission in its Report:

68 Ibid, pp.299-300

69 Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus". p.145.

70 "George Mansur Testimony, 16/1/1937 ". p.297.

71 Ibid, pp. 297-8

72 K. Nakhleh and E. Zureik (eds.) The Sociology of the Palestinians. pp.57-8

73 Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus". p.164

"The wage of the unskilled Arab labourer is much less than that of the Jewish labourer, and although the actual rates of pay vary in different occupations it may be taken generally that the ratio is roughly about five to three" ⁷⁴

What is more, it was found that the wages of most Arab workers were not enough to provide their basic needs. In 1936 the Government estimated that the average family in Jaffa needed an amount of £P 11.500 per month to provide its basic needs of food, medical treatment, accommodation etc., and it was found in a Study undertaken by the Arab Workers Association in Jaffa on the wages of 1000 Jaffa workers, that 98% of them had wages much below this level.⁷⁵ In Haifa alone there were 11,000 Arab workers living in hovels made of old petrol tins, without any water supply or the most rudimentary facilities.⁷⁶

Since the land area available to the villagers had greatly decreased, owing to Jewish land purchase and the creation of thousands of landless Arabs, while at the same time the population increased, there was a drift of labour to the towns especially the two ports of Jaffa and Haifa. ⁷⁷ Added to this was the influx of Jewish immigration, the Zionist Campaign of exclusive Jewish labour in Jewish enterprises and the inability of Arab industry to develop and expand. All these factors combined to create a widespread unemployment among the Arab labourers. In 1935 for example, the number of unemployed in Jaffa reached 2270, and during the 1936 revolt the number of unemployed in Jaffa increased to 4000. In Haifa 4500 were unemployed, and in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Nazareth the unemployment rate reached 75%. ⁷⁸

74 The Report Of Royal Commission. p.237

75 "George Mansur Testimony, 16/1/1937". p.294

76 Nevil Barbour and D. Warriner, Nisi Dominus. p.133.

77 Ibid. p.133

78 "George Mansur Testimony, 16/1/1937". p.294

It was a well known fact to the Mandate authorities in Palestine that Jewish immigration and land sales were the major causes of Arab unemployment, but nothing was done to stop this or to solve the problem of unemployment among the Arab workers, in spite of the warnings repeated in the various Commission's reports. Sir Hope Simpson concluded in his Report:

"Arab unemployment is serious and widespread. It is wrong that a Jew from Poland or Lithuania or Yemen should be admitted to fill an existing vacancy, while in Palestine there are already workmen capable of filling that vacancy who are unable to find employment" ⁷⁹

The Jewish economic sector within the Palestine economy had started and developed as an exclusive Jewish system with its own funds, industries and agriculture, as well as the skilled work force of immigrants. The Jewish sector came to the country as a well developed capitalist economy in direct competition with the pre-capitalist Arab economy, which lacked the capital, the machinery and the skill to continue developing under these circumstances.

The British mandate governments were not a mere spectator of this competition between the two sectors of the Palestinian economy. On the one hand, the Mandate Governments were facilitating the progress of the "national home" as discussed above, while on the other hand they were also minding Britain's own interests as a colonial power in the country, not only politically but economically as well. Although Britain as a mandate power was restricted internationally from establishing any special privileges for itself, it nonetheless had a typical system of colonial finance with revenues drawn from indirect taxes, especially the external tariff. The Mandate power had also a very high proportion of the government expenditure on security and finance. ⁸⁰ Palestine like the

79 Sir John Hope Simpson. Report on Immigration. p.53

80 Roger Owen (ed.), Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine. p.4

colonies had to pay its own way financially as well as to support the cost of the local British garrison. The Palestinian pound was also linked directly to Sterling and backed by reserves of British Treasury bonds and other paper held in London. ⁸¹

The Palestinian Arab economy could have survived and perhaps developed in spite of its treatment by the British as a colony. However, this was made more difficult by pressure from both the British Mandate and more threateningly the Jewish National Home. These contradictions, and competition between the two economic sectors in the Palestine economy, were developing through the 1920's and 1930's, and the revolt of 1936-39 came as a result of them. The armed struggle came to reflect the summit of these contradictions between the Arab and the Jewish sectors of the Palestinian economy.

81 Ibid. p.4

CHAPTER TWO

The Emergence of the National Movement

Political Leadership

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Palestinian Society was predominantly pre-capitalist and agrarian, controlled by the clan system and family relationships. The clan provided the individual with protection and economic security, in return for which the individual guarded the honour of the group and its welfare, and provided support in feuds, participating in its shame and sorrow. Each clan's priority was to secure its existence by maintaining three basic elements; providing its economic needs, paying taxes to the government and maintaining its own coherence. These three elements were provided by the Musha' system. The harmonious relation between the communal ownership of the land and private profit, provided by the Musha' system, helped the clan maintain its unity and coherence through the years.

The areas from Hebron in the South to Jezreel in the North were divided into sub-districts (Nawahi - singular Nahiah) headed by local

sheikhs who derived their status from the fact that they were tax-collectors for their regions. ¹ This position also gave them the status of mediators between the peasants and the government, as well as political power from being their representatives and patrons.

However, the most significant factor of the social order of Palestine in that period was that most of the population was divided along the broad lines of Qais and Yaman (two old Arab confederations before Islam), and the clans formed their alliances according to these divisions. But a clan could shift its alliances from Qais to Yaman, according to its political interests.

Among other things the Ottoman reforms (1840-1860's) brought about changes which affected the social order of Palestine. These included the integration of Palestine into the European capitalist market, the introduction of cash crops, and the emergence of a new bourgeoisie in the urban centers. There was rapid growth of the towns, which also witnessed an immigration from the rural areas, and the change of the tax-collecting system, which was moved from the hands of the local sheiks to tax-officers, and the big land owners. All these changes led to the decline of the patronage system, and the Qaisi-Yamani affiliations lost their effectiveness as the basis for clan alliances.² Local sheiks lost their influence as the rural areas began to lose their autonomous status, and social and political power began to shift to the urban areas. These new changes needed a more complex network of alliances. After the First World War the British Mandate and the Zionist movement posed a more sophisticated and more complex threat which could not be faced effectively by the old forms of alliances.

The power of the rural systems was shifting rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century to the urban elites (a'yan), as a

1 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.9

2 Salim Tamari, "Factionalism and Class Formation in Recent Palestinian History". in Roger Owen (ed.) *Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine*. p.182

result of the changes of the Ottoman reforms, especially after the government established councils in the districts to strengthen the central government, and these a'yan became local advisers to the government. However, the urban elites also gained power by obtaining administrative offices in municipalities and religious bodies. For example, the most prominent families of Jerusalem were the al-Husseini family, who had held the position of Mufti of Jerusalem since the middle of the nineteenth century, and al-Khalidi family, who had traditionally held the post of head of the Sharia'h courts in Jerusalem. Later on, the Nashashibi family advanced its status at the end of the nineteenth century when one of its members was elected to the Parliament, and other members served in the district and administrative councils. ³ In Nablus, the most prominent families were 'Abd al-Hadi, a big land owning family in the Jenin area, the Touqan family and al-Nimr family, members of both families held government posts in the Ottoman administration. Both families were also rich.

There was competition between families for administrative posts, such as mayor of the municipality of Jerusalem, held by members of the al-Husseini, and al-Khalidi families. There was also competition between the Husseinis and Nashashibis over administrative posts. This competition continued in the political life of Palestine during the first few decades of the twentieth century. It is also important to note that these were some of the richest families in Palestine. Beside being big land owners they were also involved in other commercial activities and their members had the opportunity to obtain education in other Arab countries and Europe. This qualified them to obtain administrative posts and to claim to be the natural political leaders of the country.

During the First World War these elite families began to see themselves as the future leaders of Palestine as a part of the independent

³ Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. pp. 13-14

Arab State, according to the understanding reached between the Sharif Hussein of Mecca and the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry MacMahon. In the correspondence between the two from 1915 to 1916, the British pledged to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs within specific frontiers in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire, in return for Hussein's declaration of war on Turkey. ⁴ The Palestinian elites supported the Sharif of Mecca in his war against the Ottoman Empire in the hope of gaining the promised independence for their country within an independent Arab State. However these hopes were shattered by the series of agreements and pledges by the British to the other allies and to the Zionist movement, which contradicted those promises given to the Arabs, and especially when the British made the Balfour Declaration in which the British government promised to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

The Palestinian National Movement. The First Stage 1918-29

The Palestinian elites began to realise the colonial character of the Zionist movement before the First World War, and tried to persuade the Ottoman government to prohibit land sales to the Jews. They, however were shocked by and apprehensive over the Balfour Declaration, especially as their hopes were beginning to rise in view of the British promise to the Sharif of Mecca. They began to realise that the Zionist project not only posed a danger to Palestine's independence as an Arab country but also endangered their status as the political and economic leaders of the country. It also undermined their position as potential leaders for the future independent Palestine within the independent Arab State.

⁴ Sir Henry MacMahon, letter dated 24th October 1915, to Sharif Hussein. In George Antonious, The Arab Awakening. London, 1938, p.414-427

A few months after the occupation of Palestine, the Palestinian elites began to join forces to oppose British intentions for the country and to resist the Zionist project. The first stage towards political institutionalisation was taken in 1918, when the Muslim-Christian Associations were formed to counter the realisation of Zionist goals. This began in Jaffa and Ramleh, but soon spread to Jerusalem and other parts of the country.⁵ Needless to say, the founders of the Muslim-Christian Associations and indeed all of the organisations founded in the twenties were the older of the traditional elites, including the heads of the leading families, religious leaders and merchants.

In the same year, 1918, al-Muntada al-Adabi (the literary club) was formed by members of notable families such as Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani and Yusuf al-Khatib in Jerusalem. Its aims were unity with Syria and the struggle against Zionism. This club was anti-British. al-Nadi al-Arabi (the Arab Club) was also formed in the same year, and was comprised mainly of members of the al-Husseini family. It published a newspaper Suriya al-Janubiyah (Southern Syria). Its aims were also to struggle against Zionism, though it was pro-British.⁶

It is interesting to note that the persisting tendency amongst the Palestinian leadership in the period 1919-1920 was the demand for unity with Syria, which was due to a number of factors. Palestine was considered part of Syria until it was officially excluded by the Allies at the San Remo conference in 1920. More importantly, in October 1918 Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein entered Damascus with his army and it became apparent that he was going to declare independence for Syria, which raised hopes among the Palestinians for their own independence as part of a Syrian state. This would put the Zionist project of the Jewish national home to a halt.

5 Bayan al-Hout, "The Palestinian Political Elite During the Mandate Period" Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol.9. No 1. p.88

6 A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. London n.d. p.6

Between 27 January and 4th February 1919, the First Palestine Arab National Congress was held in Jerusalem. It comprised delegates from Muslim-Christian Associations from different parts of Palestine. It also included representatives from both the Literary and Arab clubs. All came to discuss the presentation to the Peace Conference of the Palestinian demands for self-determination and to express the fears of the Palestinian Arabs regarding Zionism. ⁷ The congress ended with resolutions to reject the Balfour Declaration and the British mandate, calling for the unity of Palestine and Syria, the complete independence of Palestine within the Arab unity, and to call Palestine "Suriya al-Janubiyah" (Southern Syria). It was agreed also to send a delegation to Damascus and to Paris to try to explain Palestinian-Arab sentiments. ⁸

Two different tendencies were clear in this Congress, the first being a pro-British one, represented by the eldest and economically richest members who adopted the policy of local autonomy, "Palestine for the Palestinians". Those who favored pro-British rule in Palestine advocated the separation of Syria and Palestine. The other tendency was a Pan-Arab one represented by the younger educated middle and upper classes. They advocated an independent Palestine which would form part of a great independent Arab state. ⁹ The congress resolutions were clearly influenced by the younger generation, though none of the resolutions was anti-British. ¹⁰

During the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919, the fears of the Palestinian Arabs were confirmed by the Zionist movements there. The result of the Peace Conference was to confirm the Balfour Declaration, but more importantly it treated Palestine as a separate country from

7 Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wal Mu'assasat, Beirut, 1981. p.95-99

8 Mohammad Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya, Beirut. 1959, p.36.

9 A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern history. pp.60-61.

10 Akram Zueiter, Watha'iq al-Haraka al-Wataniya al-Filastiniya, Beirut, 1984, pp.14-17.

Syria and indeed the Arab world. This was especially so following the meeting between Prince Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein, and Weizman, the head of the Zionist Organisation, which ended in an agreement focused on talks which discussed Palestine and the Arab state as two separate entities. Faisal agreed to separate Palestine from talks about the Arab state, as well as recognising the Balfour Declaration, and also agreed to the Jewish national home project. This was clear in his letter of the 3rd March 1919, addressed to Felix Frankfurter, the US Supreme Court Justice. Faisal stated:

"The Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement. Our deputation here in Paris is fully acquainted with the proposals submitted yesterday by the Zionist Organisation to the Peace Conference. We regard them as moderate and proper. We will do our best in so far as we are concerned, to help their attainment; we will offer the Jews a hearty welcome home."¹¹

From this agreement it became clear to the Palestinian leadership that their country was not to be considered as part of the Arab state, that the Jewish national home was to be realised, and that they would be left to fight it on their own. This disappointment was clearly expressed in Spring 1920, as the first violent clashes occurred between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem during the festivities of Nabi Musa, which marked this year by political speeches against the Jewish national home and the British policy towards it.

The second Palestinian Congress was set to be held on the 15th May 1920, but the British authorities prohibited the congress from taking place. ¹² The Third Congress, however, took place between the 13th and 19th December 1920 in Haifa. It was headed by Musa Kazim al Hussein, the mayor of Jerusalem. It was decided in this congress to re-affirm the decisions of the First Congress, with one amendment, which was to

11 Gass, Nathan & Creamer, *Palestine: Problem and Promise*. p.61

12 Mohammad Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. p.39 and Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. p.123.

demand an independent Palestinian government. An executive committee was elected to pursue these resolutions. ¹³ It is important to note here, that this congress was held after the collapse of the Faisal government in Damascus, and that this was the reason for the amendment of the resolutions of the First Congress.

The congresses and their resolutions did nothing to calm the Palestinian Arab population's fears of the advancing Jewish national home, and they certainly did nothing to persuade the British to change their policy towards the Jewish national home. This was especially so given that the Palestinian leadership had taken no practical steps either on policy nor on stepping up the struggle, as they were at that period still hoping that the British would change their policy towards the Jewish national home once they realised the Arab rejection of it. These feelings of the Palestinian Arab population were again clearly expressed in 1921 by a spontaneous and violent uprising in Jaffa, where clashes occurred between Arabs and Jews, leading to a number of casualties on both sides. A commission of inquiry, sent to Palestine under Sir Thomas Haycraft to investigate the reasons for Arab uprising, concluded that its causes were Arab fears of the consequences of the Jewish national home and the rejection of the Balfour Declaration. ¹⁴

The Fourth National Congress, 29th May to 4th June 1921, was held in Jerusalem. The members confirmed the resolutions of the previous congresses and did not come up with new ones. However, it was decided at this congress to send a delegation to London to explain the Palestinian-Arab position, and to demand their rights.

The main subject which dominated the Fifth national Congress 1922 in Nablus was the position towards the Legislative Council suggested by the British authorities. The congress refused to join in this council and

¹³ Mohammad Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. p.381
and Bayan al Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assast*. pp.139-43
¹⁴ Mohammad Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. p.39

voted to boycott participation in it on the grounds that the Arab representation was not adequate, and that the council would confirm the Balfour Declaration, ¹⁵ and not have any authority to discuss the British legislative or fiscal policies in the country.

The Sixth National Congress was held in Jaffa, on the 16th June 1923, the main subject of discussion being the withholding of taxes, when the executive committee

found that the situation in the country needed further action, following consultation with the congress. ¹⁶ The Seventh and last of the National Congresses was held between 20th and 27th June 1927 and was the weakest of all the congresses. It was paralysed by internal problems due to competition among members of the leading elite families. An executive committee was elected with a large number of members, to include all the rival and competing parties. This committee, however, was unable to lead the national movement as it was consumed with political and familial rivalry. Up until the Seventh Congress the leading bodies of the national movement were the executive committees which emerged from the congresses. All were chaired by Musa Kazim al-Husseini until his death in 1934. ¹⁷

The Emergence of the Opposition

Until the Sixth National Congress, the elite leadership of the national movement was united against the common enemy, the Zionist movement, although their views varied on the degree of pro-British sentiment. Likewise, the rivalry and competition among the leading families did not affect the national movement, and indeed until 1923 the

¹⁵ Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. pp.164-5 and Robert John and Sami Hadawi, The Palestine Diary. Beirut, 1970, pp.181-182.

¹⁶ Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assast*. p.171

¹⁷ Ibid p.75

movement succeeded in being united and coherent. With the establishment of the Islamic Supreme Council in 1921, another Husseini gradually took the lead in the National Movement leadership. Haj Mohammad Amin al-Husseini, who was appointed by the British Government in Palestine as the head of the Islamic Supreme Council, had his status as a religious authority to strengthen the Husseini alliance in the national movement leadership.¹⁸

In the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth rivalry existed between the al-Husseini family and the al-Khalidi family over the three most important posts in Jerusalem, the Grand Mufti, the Islamic Shari'a Courts and the head of the Jerusalem municipality. This rivalry had shifted to become one between the al-Husseini family and the al-Nashashibi family as the latter began to advance its status towards the end of the nineteenth century. The rivalry manifested itself in the 1920's political scene in competition over the leadership of the national movement, which resulted in dividing the national movement into two camps. One was formed by the Husseini family and its network of alliances with other families in Jerusalem and other towns and villages in Palestine. It became widely known in Palestine as the Majlisi (Councilist) faction. It adopted generally an anti-Zionist position, and was known to have more of a hard line on Palestinian issues than the other faction. The other faction, headed by the Nashashibi family with its alliances, became widely known as the al-Mu'arada (Opposition) faction, which was considered a moderate faction. In their fierce competition with the Husseinies, the Opposition did not hesitate to seek help and support from both the British authorities and the Zionist movement.

Secret talks took place in 1923 between one of the Opposition leaders in the north, As'ad al-Shuqairi, and Mr Fredrik Kisch of the Zionist movement to establish a party which would be supportive of the Balfour

18 Ibid, p.175

Declaration. The party did not publicly declare its support for the Declaration, however, because of fears that it would not gain public support, instead claimed to be formed on an economic basis.¹⁹ This party was named the Palestine Patriotic Party. Its main leaders were those traditional rivals of the Husseini family in the opposition faction, As'ad al-Shuqairi, 'Arif al-Dajani and Raghیب al-Nashashibi²⁰, who did not appear publicly as a member for fear of endangering his position as mayor of Jerusalem. The publicised aims of this party were similar to those of the national movement. Its headquarters were in Jerusalem, but it succeeded in establishing a few branches in other towns. The party, however, did not last long, as it was first isolated by the public, which suspected that its undeclared aims were contrary to its declared aims. Also the leaders of this party attempted to discredit the national movement leaders belonging to the other faction and this was perceived as an attempt to split the national movement. The party also lost the support of the government and the Zionist movement which needed a party that could publicly declare its support for the Balfour Declaration, the Zionist aims and the government. The party succeeded in one thing, however, it created a split which affected the national movement and the struggle for a long time to come.²¹ After the failure of their first attempt, the Opposition set up another party, and called it the Farmers' Party, which had the same declared aims of helping the peasants. But this party also did not last long for the same reasons.²²

The term "Opposition", which those in competition with the Husseini faction applied to themselves, was deliberately chosen, as it usually gives the impression of a political force fighting against a ruling or dominant

19 Fredrik Kisch, Palestine Diary, London, 1938, pp.50-73.

20 Ibid p.50-73

21 Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assast. p.181 and Mohammad Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. pp.46-47

22 Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. p.183. and Mohammad Izzat Darwazah al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. pp.46-47

party or government. However, in Palestine the Opposition was against the leadership of the national movement, which was considered more radical, and the opposition was supported by the government.

This competition between the Majlisi faction and the Mu'arada faction continued through the thirties, and managed to maintain a split in the national movement, particularly during the revolt of 1936-1939.

The Policy of the National Movement

The main demands of the Palestinian-Arab national movement were the establishment of an elected representative council, a free democratic national government, a constitution according to the wishes of the people, and the repudiation of the Balfour Declaration, the current constitution, the government legislative and consultative councils. It also opposed recognition of the Arab Agency suggested by the government as an equivalent to the Jewish Agency. In addition, the movement wanted Palestine to be considered part of the Arab world and to remain Arab, without any foreign or Zionist domination. Finally it wanted Arabic to be considered as the official language of the country. It also wanted Jewish immigration and the sale of lands to be stopped.²³ The demands were repeated in the Palestinian National Congresses as well as in letters to the British authorities in Palestine. These were carried by various Palestinian delegations to London, and repeated in meetings between the executive committees of the national Movement and government officials.

In 1920, the civil administration replaced the military regime in Palestine. The First High Commissioner chosen by the British

²³ These demands were repeated in the Congresses of the National movement. See Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History* ; Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat* and Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*.

government was Sir Herbert Samuel, a Zionist, and one of the Chief proponents of Zionist ideas in the War Cabinet.²⁴ In the same year the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, told the leaders of the Palestinian national movement in a meeting held in Jerusalem, that it was not in his power to repudiate the Balfour Declaration, and that the Palestinian Arabs could do nothing but accept it. He added that it was also not in his power to veto Jewish immigration to Palestine.²⁵

In 1923, the mandate over Palestine was officially in effect. It was also clear to the Palestinian Arabs that the mandate would be supportive of the Zionist project.

Between 1920 and 1925 the country witnessed waves of uprisings and demonstrations, some of which were violent in protest against Zionism and the mandate policy. On the 27th February 1920 a large Arab demonstration was held in Jerusalem, and in the old town of Jerusalem a violent outbreak took place between the 4th and 10th of April. The fighting between Arabs and Jews continued despite a declaration of martial law in the town. It began at Nabi Musa Festival when some Arabs celebrating the feast were insulted and provoked by some Jews. The total number of casualties on both sides from this incident was 251.²⁶ In Haifa, the British authorities prohibited a demonstration which was to be held on the 25th March 1921. It was held despite the prohibition, however, and a clash occurred between the demonstrators and the police.

On the 28th March 1921 another demonstration was prohibited in Jaffa and, as a result, the town went on strike. On the same day, nevertheless a demonstration was held in Jerusalem. On the first of May 1921, there were two Jewish demonstrations in Tel Aviv, one held by the

24 Nevil Barbour and D. Warriner, *Nisi Dominus*. p.98

25 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History*. p.93 and Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. p.169

26 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History*. p76

Zionist Socialists (Ahadot Ha 'Avodah), and the other held by the Communists. A clash occurred between them and the Communists were driven to Jaffa. Another clash took place between the Arabs and the Zionists in the al-Mansheiyah quarter of the town. ²⁷ Rumours spread through Palestine that the inhabitants of Jaffa were attacked by the Jews, and as a result, demonstrations were held in most of the Palestinian towns, in which the Arab demonstrators asked to be allowed to bear arms to protect themselves from the armed Jews.

By the end of 1923, there was a growing belief among the Palestinian Arabs that the mandate administration was pro-Zionist. This belief was strengthened when Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, issued a white paper which included the British policy towards Palestine. The British commitment to the Jewish national home was confirmed in this paper. ²⁸

The first two months of 1925 witnessed another wave of protests, demonstrations and strikes. Between 1925 and 1928, the country witnessed a relative calming of the political atmosphere. This was due to two reasons. First the notable decline in Zionist activity and Jewish immigration. Second, a decline in the activities of the national movement, mainly because of internal conflicts within factions. The relative slowdown of political activities, however, did not calm the Palestinian Arabs' feelings of fear and concern over the Zionist project or the British intentions towards the country.

²⁷ Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. p.171

²⁸ The Churchill White Paper. June 3, 1922, Cmd. 1700, Vol.23. pp65-70

The Uprising of 1929²⁹

August 1929 saw the most violent uprising the country had seen during the British rule until then. This was referred to officially as the Wailing Wall incident.

The Wailing Wall (as the Jews call it, the Buraq Wall as the Muslims know it), is the western wall of the al-Aqsa Mosque which is the third most holy place for Muslims after Mecca and Medina. It is Muslim property and Jews were traditionally allowed to pray there with mutual understanding between both communities concerning certain rules which were to be observed by the Jews. This included a rule forbidding them from bringing screens and furniture to the foot of the wall. The incident began when Jews brought screens to the wall; the British authorities ordered them to remove a screen, and when it was not removed, the police moved it forcibly.

The government appointed a commission to study the status of the interested parties regarding the wall. The commission findings were published on the 19th November 1928 and concluded that the wall was Muslim property. This came as no surprise to the Jews, but some Zionist extremists wrote about it in the Hebrew press and made a national issue of it. At the same time, the Arabs, who were offended, became agitated and much was written in the Arab press as well.

On the 3rd August 1929, a Jew was wounded near the wall by an Arab. On the 14th two Zionist organisations sponsored a meeting in Tel-Aviv, in which they incited the Jews against the Arabs. This culminated in a Jewish demonstration at the wall the following day. In return, there was a

29 The following events are compiled from the following sources:

Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*.

A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History*.

Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*.

Mohammad Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*.

Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*.

Muslim demonstration the next day near the wall, On the 17th August, a fight developed between an Arab and a Jew in Jerusalem, during which the Jew was stabbed. This incident brought the Arabs and Jews to the place of the fight and another clash took place resulting in injuries to 11 Jews and 15 Arabs. There were renewed clashes on the 21st August, when a Jewish demonstration took place as a result of the fatal stabbing on the 17th August. This was followed by an Arab demonstration on the 23rd August. On the 24th August, 1929, a clash occurred in the Hebron between Arabs and Jews. A large number of Jews were killed. A revenge attack on a mosque in the town by the Jews caused considerable damage.

The town of Nablus remained quiet at the beginning of the uprising, but on the 23rd August, when news came of clashes in Jerusalem, a crowd attacked the police station and two Arabs were shot by police. In Haifa, clashes and riots were reported between Arabs and Jews in the town. In Jaffa the police dispersed Arab crowds who gathered on the Jaffa - Tel Aviv border. However, the Jews forced their way to the town of Jaffa and killed the Imam of a mosque and six other worshippers. Military reinforcements arrived in the country from abroad, and the government was able to put an end to the clashes.

Over one thousand persons were tried on charges relating to the riots of August 1929; more than 90% of these were Arabs. The courts confirmed twenty-six death sentences, twenty five of which were Arabs and only one a Jew. ³⁰

On 14th September 1929 the British government announced that a special commission under the chairmanship of colonial judge Sir Walter S. Shaw would go to Palestine to inquire into the causes of the Arab uprising. It arrived in Palestine on the 14th June 1930. The commission found that the causes were mainly the Arab political and economic fears

30 A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p.145

of Jewish immigration on the one hand, and the amount of land that they had already acquired. ³¹

On the role played by the Palestinian leadership in this uprising, there are two contradictory points of view. On the one hand Bayan al-Hout considers that Haj Amin al-Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem, head of the Islamic Supreme Council, and the executive committee were behind the uprising and played a crucial role in it. Although she states that there is no documentary evidence of responsibility for the outbreak on the part of either the Mufti or the executive committee, this was due, according to her, to the fact that the Mufti was afraid of losing his post as head of the Muslim Supreme Council. However, she continues to state that there is documented evidence to prove that the Mufti and the executive committee were trying to calm and restrain the masses, asking them to stop the violence. ³² Naji Allush, ³³ on the other hand, views the uprising as spontaneous and believes that the masses did not wait for orders from the leadership or plan or organise it. He goes on to say that the eruption of the masses shows that:

"The rejection of the masses not only of the policy of occupation and the Zionist movement, but also their rejection of the policy of conferences, meetings and protests adopted by the executive committee."³⁴

In Allush's view, it would have been possible and easy for this uprising to become a national revolt, "if there was a leadership which did not have in its ranks collaborators and agents". He believes that all that the executive committee offered was more protests. ³⁵ Kayyali's view seems to agree with that of Allush, that the notable leadership did not play a positive role during the uprising. As he says, the Muslim notables

"....Haj Amin, Raghieb Nashashibi and Musa Kazim signed a proclamation in which they disassociated themselves from

31 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. p.211

32 Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. pp.228-231

33 Naji Allush, *al-Moqawama al-Arabiya*. Beirut, 1967, p.70

34 Ibid p.71

35 Ibid p.72

mob actions leaving the unmanned and unorganised fellahin and bedouins to face aeroplanes armored cars and British troops"³⁶

Kayyali quotes a letter sent by the High Commissioner to Lord Passfield, the Colonial Secretary, in which he describes the Mufti's loyalty to the British:

"The Mufti said he promised to help in the maintenance of order and to co-operate with the government. He had always held this attitude and he held it still and would continue to hold it even if the government did not listen to his representations. He regarded this as his duty not only to the government but to God and the people and also to his own conscience."³⁷

Although it is evident through much documentation of that period that the Mufti and the executive committee did not participate in the uprising or organise it, at least publicly, it is important to mention a few points here which might shed some light on this issue, on the role of Haj Amin and indeed on the executive committee. First the executive committee with its structure which comprised both the nationalists and the opposition was not organised, homogeneous or strong enough to organise such an uprising. However, some individuals from the executive committee who were politically active and more militant tried to help organise the uprising or play the role of agitators, as for example was evident from the visits of Subhi al-Khadra to the northern areas of Palestine during the uprising.³⁸

As for the Mufti himself, he maintained a position which indeed was maintained by the rest of the leadership during the uprising: a position of double standards. On the one hand he did not want to lose his post as the head of the Muslim Supreme Council and thus lose part of his influence in the leadership of the national movement. He also did not want to lose the friendship he managed to maintain up to that date with the British.

36 A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p.145

37 A letter from High Commissioner Chancellor to Lord Passfield, dated 12th October 1929, as quoted in Ibid p.147.

38 Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. p.230

Thus when the uprising was taking place he tried to calm and restrain the masses and he hurried to dissociate himself from it when it ended. On the other hand, he did not want to lose the trust, or more importantly, the leadership of the masses. So while he was confirming his loyalty to the British, he made sure that some of his close associates would appear publicly and be with the masses - as did some members of the executive committee.

The uprising of 1929 by the masses, both rural and urban, was a clear expression of two facts which were widely understood. First, the Jewish national home was dependent on the help of the British authorities. Therefore the struggle should be directed against the British mandate as well as against the Zionist movement. Secondly, it was an expression of the mistrust felt by the masses towards the methods adopted by the leadership of the national movement, such as meetings with officials, delegations, letters of protest and congresses. The most important phenomenon of the uprising, however, was the participation of the peasants and the bedouins. Due to the rapidly increasing level of Jewish land purchase in the 20s, thousands of peasants had become landless, while the bedouins faced more limitations on the area of land available for grazing their herds. Furthermore, the economic depression of the late 20's and in particular the bad harvest of 1929 added to the frustration felt in the rural areas.

The Second Stage 1930-35, The Emergence of Political Parties

The progress of the Jewish national home during the twenties and early thirties, the clear evidence of British involvement and facilitation of this project and a failure of the national leadership to articulate a strong and practical policy towards the struggle, necessitated a new and more sophisticated form of organisational framework to replace the Muslim-Christian Associations. This led to the emergence of political parties.

The political parties in the early thirties could be classified into two groups according to their structure and ideologies. One group of parties was formed by the traditional leadership and reflected the factional rivalry between the two main factions, the Husseini and the Nashashibi. The parties were structurally a continuation of the old Muslim-Christian Associations in the sense that they were urban based and their leaders were the elderly members of notable families who depended on clan and familial alliances. Ideologically they were anti-Zionist and maintained friendly relations with the British.

The other group was made up of those parties which had the new leadership of younger generations. These were educated middle-class people whose ideology was more radical. Some of these smaller parties were secret and adopted armed struggle. In general these latter parties were based along class lines and formed an ideological challenge to the traditional leadership. On the 4th January 1932, the first National Congress of Arab Youth was held in Jaffa. A party was founded bearing the same name during the congress. It was founded by a younger and more radical generation of nationalists, and its members were mostly young men. Its programme stressed the following: that Arab countries were one unit uniting in the effort to achieve Arab independence; and fight against colonialism and that all Palestinian land was Arab land and anyone who sold or helped to sell part of it to the Jews committed a crime of major proportions.³⁹ The most important achievement of this party was the setting up of Arab Boy Scouts, who were the first to guard the shores against illegal Jewish immigration.

On the 2nd August 1932 it was announced that the al-Istiqlal (Independence) Party was formed in Nablus. Its nine founders were Mu'in al-Madi, Izzat Darwazah, 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi, Subhi al-Khadra, Rashid al-Haj Ibrahim, Akram Zueiter, Fahmi al-'Abbushi, Dr. Salim

39 Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assast. p.728

Salameh and 'Ajaj Nuwaihid.⁴⁰ Some of the founders were members of the al-Istiqlal Party which was founded in Damascus in 1919-20. One man who contributed greatly to the foundation of the party was Nabih al-'Azme, a Syrian nationalist who was living in exile in Jerusalem.⁴¹ The party's aims could be summarised in three points: the complete independence of the Arab countries; the Arab countries are one unity which does not admit of division; Palestine is an Arab country and is a natural part of Syria.⁴² It saw in Pan-Arabism the remedy of all illnesses in Arab society.⁴³ The party's structure was not based on factional or familial lines and the social composition of the membership reflected a high concentration of intellectuals and members of the emerging bourgeois class.⁴⁴ Politically and structurally this militant party was an alternative to the traditional leadership of the national movement.

Haj Amin al-Husseini by this time was not only the Mufti of Jerusalem and the head of the Islamic Supreme Council, but he also became the most important leader in the national movement. So, when the al-Istiqlal Party was formed and announced its political programme, which included a strong criticism of the traditional leadership, Haj Amin was unhappy, considering the criticisms to reflect upon him personally.⁴⁵ More importantly, he felt that this party with its militant members and radical programme was an ideological challenge to his power and he started a campaign against it.

However, the al-Istiqlal Party did not last long, dissolving in 1933 because of financial problems, and the Mufti's campaign against it. More

40 Mohammad Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. pp103-108

41 Samih Shabib, *Hizb al-Istiqlal Fi Filastin*. Beirut, 1981 p.44-45

42 Ibid pp. 48-49 and Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. pp.44-5

43 Ghassan Kanafani, "Thawrat 1936-39 Fi Filastin: Khalfiyyat wa Tafasil", *Shu'un Filastiniya*. Vol. 6-7, No. 6, (January 1972)p.63

44 Salim Tamari, "Factionalism and Class Formation in Recent Palestine". p.196

45 Naji Allush, *al-Moqawama al-Arabiya*. p.96

important, it did not gain the support of the masses in spite of its apparent radical programme and militant attitude. This was because it did not include within its ranks peasants, workers or representatives of rural areas. It remained exclusive to the well-to-do urban educated notables.

In 1934 the High Commissioner in Palestine announced that municipal elections would be held in the same year. This increased the heat of the competition between the two main factions, as the Majlisi faction decided to enter the elections to take the mayorship of Jerusalem from Raghیب al Nasheini family and the Khalidi family, the Majlisi faction chose Dr. Hussein al-Khalidi to be their representative in the municipal elections, as the Khalidi family did not interfere in the struggle between the Husseini and Nashashibi factions (although some members of the Khalidi family were supportive of the Opposition). Dr. al-Khalidi's rival in the election for the post of Jerusalem mayor was Raghیب al-Nashashibi. Dr. Khalidi won the election, though as a mayor he did not support either of the two factions and remained impartial.

In December 1934, after their failure to win the municipal elections, the opposition, namely the Nashashibi family, formed a party, the National Defence Party which was perhaps the strongest opposition party to that date. A permanent theme of the Defence Party publications was the call for a positive policy, namely the readiness to co-operate with the government at various levels. This included the establishment of self-governing institutions. ⁴⁶ This party managed to establish branches in many towns and villages of Palestine, especially in the Nablus area, where they had strong supporters, such as the Tuaqan family and the al-Shak'a family, and support also came from As'ad al-Shuqairi, the Mufti of Acre, and some notables from Gaza, Ramleh and Hebron. It is important to point out here that the Defence party had comprised

46 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.67.

among its ranks the richest landowners, orange-growers and merchants. It had strong relations with Prince 'Abdullah, the prince of Trans-Jordan.

The Majlisi faction had also set up a political party which was one of the strongest of the period, the Palestinian-Arab Party, which was formed on the 26th March 1935, and was headed by Jamal al-Husseini. Its adopted programme was of strong nationalist character. ⁴⁷ The aims of this party were the independence of Palestine and the abolition of the mandate. Other goals were resistance to the establishment of the Jewish national home in Palestine; national and political unity with the other Arab countries, and improving the situation of Arab people in Palestine, both culturally and economically. ⁴⁸ This party managed to establish many branches in all the areas of Palestine. Certainly the Mufti leadership had affected this spread of the party, in spite of the fact that it did not adopt an anti-British policy.

During that period other smaller parties were formed, such as the Reform Party which was set up mainly by the Khalidi family of Jerusalem. It shared the same political views as the opposition Defence Party, including acceptance of the Legislative Council. The Reform Party also had good relations with Prince 'Abdullah of Trans-Jordan. ⁴⁹

On the 5th of October 1935 another small party was formed in Nablus, The National Coalition Party headed by 'Abd al-Latif Salah. the most important factor, perhaps, was that this party was formed in Nablus, further from the political center, Jerusalem, and that it called the other parties to meet and try to unite in one front. ⁵⁰ This party's political programme was nationalist in general, and it was impartial towards the Majlisi - Mu'arada factions. ⁵¹

47 Ghassan Kanafani "Thawrat 1936-39" in *Shu'un Filastiniya*. vol. 6-7 No.6 (January 1972) p.45.

48 Ibid p.50

49 Khalil Nankleh and Elia Zuriek, (eds.) *The Sociology of the Palestinians*. p.182

50 Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assast*. pp312-3.

51 Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. p.118

All the above parties, however, including the al-Istiqlal Party, were urban-based. The members were the educated upper and middle-classes and did not involve peasants or poorer, less-educated classes of society. This explains why their programmes, whether traditional or radical, were nevertheless not practical and did not answer the needs of the people. All shared similar means of struggle such as letters, protests, condemnation or sending delegations to London.

During the same period, other organisations were emerging. They were smaller, secret organisations, which believed in armed struggle. They included organisations like the Jihad led by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, which operated in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Hebron areas. This party was formed in 1934. In Nablus, Tulkarm and Qalqilya areas, the Revolutionary Youth Organisation was formed in 1935 under the leadership of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Haj Ibrahim from Tulkarm. In Hebron another secret organisation was formed under the name al-Kaff al-Khadra (the Green Hand) which also believed in armed struggle.⁵² Finally, in Haifa another secret movement was formed, whose members were to play a significant role during the revolt of 1936-39. Its members were workers, peasants and uneducated poorer classes, from urban as well as rural areas. It became known as Izz al-Din al-Qassam movement, after its head, Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam.

52 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.126.

CHAPTER THREE

The Movement of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam

The Early Armed Groups

The rise in the number of Jewish immigrants in the twenties, together with the alarming scale of land sales to the Jews, as well as the failure of the traditional Palestinian leadership to articulate an effective policy towards the Zionist project, led some of the Palestinian Arab nationalists to turn to arms as an effective form of resistance. Various guerrilla groups were formed in the central and northern regions of Palestine. They began to launch attacks against Jewish settlements in the hope that this might frighten the Jews from settling in Palestine. Darwazah mentions some armed groups operating in the Samakh area, on the Palestine-Syria borders as early as 1920.¹

A small armed group was formed in the Tulkarm area in 1923 led by 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq [who became one of the most prominent commanders during the revolt of 1936-39], which attacked Jewish agricultural settlements near 'Arif's village al-Taybah. This group, which

1. Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. p37

was named al-Kaff al-Aswad (The Black Hand)², was formed of around twenty men, who, on the orders of 'Arif, would gather, launch an attack and disperse. One such attack was described by Faisal 'Abd al-Raziq, 'Arif's son

"My father formed al-Kaff al-Aswad. He used to go to our lands, which were very close to the Jewish settlements, with a few armed men and attack. On 5th May 1921 he gathered some twenty men from our village and the neighbouring villages and attacked Petah Tekva (Mulabbis). The only thing which saved the settlers that day was a British dispatch passing by the settlement on its way to Haifa from Jenin"³

al-Kaff al-Aswad did not last long. However, most of its men joined 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq when he set up armed units during the revolt 1936-39.

In October 1929, another armed group was formed in the northern region of Palestine. It used to operate in the areas of Safad, Samakh and Acre, and take refuge in the hills near the Syrian borders. This group, which called itself Isabat al-Kaff al-Akhdar (The Green Hand gang), was made up of twenty-seven men and led by Ahmad Tafish. During October it launched an attack on the Jewish quarter of Safad with the co-operation of supporters in the town. It was reinforced by a number of Druze rebels who had fought against the French in the Syrian rebellion (1925), some of whom moved to Trans-Jordan after the rebellion, leading to an increase in the attacks on the Jews in that area.⁴ As a result of this, the British authorities sent army reinforcements to the northern area, which were aided by the French on the other side of the border. This combined effort between the British and the French authorities

2. During the revolt of 1936-39 another group named al-Kaff al-Aswad operating in towns, especially Haifa, assassinating British personnel and Arab collaborators. It is not known who formed this group, but there are speculations that it was either from among al-Qassam's followers, or from members of the Abu Durra Fasil (unit on which see below).

3. Faisal 'Abd al-Raziq, personal interview, 2/2/85, al-Taybah, Triangle. This attack was mentioned in Palestine: A study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies. ESCO Foundation for Palestine Inc., New Haven, Vol.1

4. A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p156.

during the first two months of 1930 led to the arrest of sixteen members of the group including its leader ⁵ and was one of the main reasons for the dissolution of Isabat al-Kaff al-Akhdar.

Although the Green Hand gang had dispersed and ceased to exist,⁶ it won the sympathy of the people of that area, whose nationalist feelings were at their highest after the uprising of 1929. It inspired many of the young men who later joined the revolt and its leader Ahmad Tafish became a sort of legend in that area. Mustafa al-Bakri was one of those inspired by Ahmad Tafish, he became a Fasil leader during the revolt:

"I knew Tafish, he was from Safad. This was before the revolt. He was with some others, fighting against the Government and clashing with the troops. He was a wanted man. I saw him in 1929 when I was working in Deir Hannah. He came there and we all went to see him.... They call me Abu-Ahmad because when my first son was born, I called him Ahmad, so my sister said, 'that's Ahmad Tafish'."⁷

In spite of the sympathy of the people in the northern region towards them Green Hand gang, and the reinforcement it received from the Druze, it was not able to continue operating in that region; nor was it able to spread its influence across the country to other areas. On the one hand, the Green Hand gang, in spite of its genuinely patriotic aims, lacked the ideological and political framework which would have enabled it to mobilize people into the armed struggle. They were a small group of fighters who believed in the armed struggle without developing any ideological or political framework, and thus were unsuccessful in mobilising people to join their ranks. On the other hand, in spite of the feelings that the people had towards the Jewish national home which were heightened during the 1929 uprising, still the people of Palestine

5. Ahmad Tafish was arrested in Trans-Jordan and handed over to the British authorities in Palestine. Ibid, p156.

6. Some members later joined the different Fasail of the revolt, but not as a group, and the name Green Hand Group was not used again in that area.

7. Mustafa al-Bakri, Personal interview 20/2/85 al-Be'neh, Galilee.

were not ready for an armed revolt. For one reason, they were not mobilized towards armed struggle; for another they were mostly hoping - and the national leadership is greatly responsible for - that the British would realise their mistake in supporting the establishment of the Jewish national home, and that the different commissions which were holding investigations into the situation in Palestine would dissuade the British governments in London and Palestine from their policy of supporting the Zionist project. Up to that period the Palestinian Arabs saw the Zionists as their enemy, and the struggle was directed against them, while the British were not yet considered as enemies.

Another factor which worked against the spreading of armed groups in that period was that the dry season was approaching,⁸. This had made the people in the rural areas (upon whom the armed groups depended for support) more concerned about managing their crops than with preparing to arm and go to the mountains to launch attacks against the Jews.

After the dispersal of the Green Hand gang, the attacks on the Jewish settlements by no means ceased. There were several armed attacks against Jewish settlements, and other incidents such as cutting down their trees or burning their crops. This sort of action took place in almost every part of the country where Jewish settlements were to be found. These attacks were carried out either by individuals or by groups still working secretly.

The al-Qassam movement

On the 20th of November 1935 the British authorities in Palestine released a statement in which it announced that a clash had taken place that day between police and "Arab bandits" to the north of Ya'bad near

8.A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p156.

Jenin, in which "four or five bandits were killed, another five were arrested". In this clash a British constable was killed and another was wounded. "Among the bandits known to have been killed were Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam.... who disappeared from his house in Haifa early this month and was the organiser of the Band."⁹ However, both the British authorities and the Zionist movement's intelligence knew that Sheikh al-Qassam was not a bandit, and that his movement was a political one. He had been under surveillance for some time, and was suspected of having launched attacks against Jewish settlements and British officials.

Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam was a Syrian religious scholar from the village of Jabla in the district of Latakia, he was educated at al-Azhar in Cairo, where many of his biographers and some of his followers believe that he had been studying under Sheikh Mohammad 'Abduh.¹⁰ Back in Syria he began to teach at the mosque in his village. When the Italians invaded Tripolitania (Libya) in September 1911, al-Qassam organised an expedition of 250 volunteers to go and fight the Italians. However, after he and his men had waited in Alexandretta (Iskandarun) for forty days to be transported to Libya, orders came from the Ottoman authorities to return. al-Qassam used the money he collected for the expedition to build a school in his village.¹¹

In 1918-19 the French moved to Jabla, which was part of the "Blue Zone" set aside for them, and al-Qassam took to the mountains of his

9. Akram Zueiter *Watha'iq al-Haraka*. Document No.215, p397.

10. One biographer who confirms the studying of al-Qassam under Abduh is Ali Hussein Khalaf, Tajribat al-Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Syria, second edition 1986, p9. Mohammad Hanafi, who was one of al-Qassam's disciples also confirms the study of al-Qassam with Abduh. However, al-Qassam's classmate at al-Azhar Izz al-Din al-Tanukhi in an interview about al-Qassam did not mention al-Qassam as being a student of Mohammad Abduh. The accounts of both Hanafi and Tanukhi were quoted in Abdullah Schleiffer's "The Life and Thought of Izz al-Din al-Qassam" Islamic Quarterly. Vol. 23, No. 9, August 1981, p62.

11. Samih Hammoudeh, al-Wa'i wa al-Thawra. Jerusalem, 1985, p.25.

area, where he established a guerrilla group to fight the French.¹² However, with the advance of the French troops to Damascus in 1920 and the death sentence passed on him by the French, al-Qassam fled Syria and arrived in Palestine in 1921.¹³ al-Qassam settled in Haifa, which became the refuge for many Syrian exiles. He worked between 1922 and 1925 in the al-Burj Islamic school. When in 1925 the al-Istiqlal mosque was established, al Qassam became the Imam of this mosque. He later joined the Muslim Youth Association in Haifa, and in 1928 he was elected as the head of the Muslim Youth Association branch in Haifa, while he was still an Imam at the al-Istiqlal mosque.¹⁴

al-Qassam's early teachings

Since his early months in Palestine, al-Qassam had established contacts with the people around him, in particular enjoying good relations with people of the slums of Haifa such as railway workers, construction workers, stevedores, artisans, and small shop-keepers. He started to teach those of them who were illiterate to read and write.¹⁵ At the al-Istiqlal mosque, al-Qassam tried to put across his ideas about Jihad (holy war) to the people, both in an indirect way by always quoting in his prayers those verses in the Quran which deal with Jihad, and in a direct way in Friday preaching and the daily evening lessons. He spoke of the struggle against both the British and the Zionists, as he believed that the Zionists would not be able to succeed in establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine without the aid that they were getting from the British. One of the early followers of al-Qassam recalls that at one of his sermons at Friday prayers in 1927, al-Qassam asked the people to receive the

12. Ibid, pp26-32.

13. Abdullah Schleiffer, "The Life and Thought" Islamic Quarterly, (August 1981) p.67.

14. Ali Hussein Khalaf, Tajribat al-Sheikh. p37

15. Samih Hammoudeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. p38

Jewish immigrants who came to Palestine under the British protection as "enemies, and not as immigrants or guests",¹⁶ Arabi Badawi, who also was one of al-Qassam's disciples, recalls him agitating the people against the British:

"I heard Sheikh al-Qassam preach in the mosque. He was blaming the people for not fighting and not declaring Jihad, he said that most of the young men in Haifa were workers, and that instead of carrying a brush to clean the shoes of the British, they should carry guns and fight against them. All of his teachings were about fighting the British."¹⁷

al-Qassam used provocative language in his preaching to stir the feelings of the people and provoke them to fight. He also visited the villages around the Haifa and Jenin areas to spread his ideas of Jihad, and to establish relations and contacts. He was also preaching in these villages against selling lands to the Jews and in favour of fighting against the brokers who assisted with the sale of Arab lands.¹⁸

Organisation

While giving religious lessons at the mosque and leading discussions after prayers, al-Qassam studied the men who came to his lessons and selected those whom he found concentrating more or responsive to his teaching, especially regarding Jihad, and those whom he felt might have potential. He visited them for further discussions and encouraged them to visit him. He taught those of them who were illiterate how to read and write, using the Quran as a text.¹⁹

al-Qassam became a popular personality and people came to him not only to solve religious problems but also for various other things. Living

16. As quoted from an interview with Sulaiman Abu Hamam in Ali Hussein Khalaf, *Tajribat al-Sheikh*. p.42

17. Arabi Badawi, Personal interview, 23/5/84, Qabalan, Nablus,

18. Samih Hammoudeh, *al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra*. p.50

19. Abdullah Schleiffer, "The Life and Thought" in *Islamic Quarterly*, (August 1981), p. 70.

in their shanty towns the workers, the dispossessed peasants who were evicted from the land, the quarry workers and seamen, all were poor and largely ignored by the traditional leadership. They found in al-Qassam not only a leader but also one who was most able to express the feelings that they had towards the British Mandate and the Zionist movement, and they found in his methods an alternative to those adopted by the traditional leadership.

Selecting his disciples from these people, al-Qassam started the second stage towards forming his movement. His organisation was secretive and he formed his men on the basis of 'cells', each cell being formed by a few men who would work and train together, with one man among them to be the link between the cell and other cells. This method kept the organisation secret. The training with weapons was carried out in the same secretive way and took place in the mountains around Haifa and remote areas. Arabi Badawi recalls the way that he was trained:

"Sheikh Nimr al-Sa'di was living in an area called: "the forest of Shefa 'Amr". It is now called Sa'dia, I went with him there. That place was so isolated that you could form a state here and nobody would notice. There we trained with weapons. Sheikh Nimr trained us how to use a rifle, how to hit a target correctly and how to clean and take care of the rifle."²⁰

Hasan Shibliq was also a member of the al-Qassam organisation and he underwent similar training in a different area, and was trained by al-Qassam himself:

"Before going to the Carmel we used to meet at one of the three mosques, al-Istiqlal, al-Jami' al-Kabir or al-Jami' al-Saghir. We would go in threes to the quarries... al Qassam used to accompany each group of three, and at the quarry he would teach us how to dismantle a rifle, how to put it back together and how to clean it."²¹

In addition to the fighters in his organisation, al Qassam also formed five committees by 1935 to organise the movement:

20. Arabi Badawi, personal interview, 23/5/84, Qabalan, Nablus
21. As quoted in Ali Hussein Khalaf, *Tajribat al-Sheikh*. p18

(1) a committee for propaganda, which was composed of Muslim scholars and sheikhs to preach for the revolution; (2) a committee for military training; (3) a committee for supplies, to collect money to buy arms and food; (4) a committee for intelligence to gather information about the movements of British police and troops; and (5) a committee for political contacts.²²

Most of the published references do not agree on the number of the members of al-Qassam's movement, the number varying between 50 and 200 men, all of whom were said to have been concentrated in northern Palestine. Kayyali suggests their number to have been two hundred with a further 800 sympathisers, and suggests that al-Qassam had no real contact with the peasants and workers in the southern and central Palestine.²³ According to Sheikh Mohammad Hanafi, who served as al-Qassam's deputy and treasurer for the organisation and who was entrusted by al-Qassam with contacts in all the circles of the Mujahidin, the number of trained and initiated men was more than 1000.²⁴ He states that while the movement was strongest in the northern districts, al-Qassam had followers and secret circles throughout most of the countryside, even as far south as Gaza.²⁵ Another early member of the movement, Ibrahim Sheikh Khalil also agrees with Sheikh Hanafi that the number of Mujahidin was more than 1000.²⁶ Arabi Badawi estimated that the number lay between two to three hundred men.²⁷

al-Qassam became widely known in Palestine after his death in a clash with the British police in Ya'bad near Jenin in November 1935. However, this clash was not the first military operation of the movement. al-

22. Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya al-Kubra, Cairo, 1957, p23.

23. A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p180

24. Abdullah Schleiffer, "The Life and Thought" in Islamic Quarterly, (August 1981) p.75

25. Ibid. p.75

26. Ibrahim al-Sheikh Khalil (Abu Is'af), Shu'un Filastiniya. Vol. 6/7, no. 7 (March 1972), p10

27. Arabi Badawi, Personal interview, 23/5/84. Qabalan, Nablus

Qassam and his Mujahidin started with military actions before 1935 and were directed against the Jewish settlements in the hope that such attacks would prevent the Jews from settling in Palestine.

The first of these attacks known to have been carried out by the al-Qassam movement was against the al-Yajur settlement (near Haifa), on the 5th April 1931, in which a Jewish car convoy was ambushed and three were killed in the attack.²⁸ In the same year al-Qassam's Mujahidin shot and injured a man in the Nihlal settlement (also near Haifa). On the 16th January 1932 a Jewish settler from the Balfouria settlement was killed. On the 5th March of the same year another settler from Kfar Hasidim was killed and on the 30th April 1932 two settlers were injured at the Kfar Yehezqil settlement in another attack.²⁹ All these settlements were near Haifa. On the 22nd December 1932 another attack was launched against the Nihlal settlement and two settlers were killed as a result. This last attack was significant in that it made the British authorities in Palestine and the Zionist movement aware of the attack, as it was the first in which bombs were used.³⁰ The British authorities announced in the newspapers a reward of £500 for any one giving information leading to the arrest of those who carried out the attack.³¹

However, by the end of 1932 al-Qassam and his men decided to suspend their attacks following the arrest of three of the men who attacked Nihlal, one of whom was sentenced to death.³²

28. Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. p324 and Y.Porath, The Palestinian Arab National Movement. p134.

29. Samih Hammoudeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. pp.56-7

30. Ibid p.57

31. al-Jami'ah al-'Arabiya newspaper, 29/12/1932

32. Samih Hammoudeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. p58

The clash in Ya'bad

There are a number of reasons behind al-Qassam's decision to leave Haifa with a number of his men towards the end of 1935. The number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine had risen to a level never reached before, the number of legal immigrants entering that year being 60,000.³³ At the same time the number of unemployed Arabs was rising constantly, and the flow of landless peasants to the towns was increasing constantly, adding to the urban unemployed. In addition there were attacks and assaults on Arab villages by the Zionist Revisionists. These attacks, together with the discovery of a considerable consignment of arms belonging to the Zionists, confirmed the Palestinian Arab fears of Zionist colonisation, and enraged Arab public opinion.³⁴ At the same time the traditional leadership of the Palestinian Arabs was still unable to articulate a practical policy toward resisting the Zionist intentions for the country or the British Mandate policy of supporting the Jewish national home. Another reason which helped al-Qassam to decide the timing of leaving Haifa was that he was expecting to be arrested, as he knew that he and some of his men were under surveillance.³⁵

Leaving Haifa, al-Qassam went with nineteen of his men to the mountains of the village of Noris, near Jenin, where they met with Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di. In Nuris they split, ten men staying with Sheikh Farhan and nine accompanying al-Qassam to Ya'bad. On the way to Ya'bad, near the village of al-Barid (near Jenin, now known as al-Hashimia), al-Qassam group clashed with some policemen who were following them, and one of al-Qassam's group was shot dead.³⁶ Arabi

33. See chapter one.

34. A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History*. p181

35. Hasan Shibliq, a Qassamite, as quoted in *Bayan al-Hout al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. p326.

36. Arabi Badawi, interview. 23/5/1984, Qabalan Nablus. This story was confirmed in a statement by then Police which was published in *Filastin Newspaper* 19/11/1935, about a clash between the police and "bandits" during which one "bandit" was killed.

Badawi recalls what happened in Ya'bad that day and the clash which resulted in the death of Sheikh al-Qassam.

"There we were, nineteen of us in the mountains, around seventy others promised to follow later. The nine of us who stayed with al-Qassam proceeded to Ya'bad. On the way we clashed with the police, and one of our brothers, Ahmad al-Qassam was killed. We continued to Ya'bad and stayed with Sheikh Said al-Hassan for two or three nights. Then we realised that the village was under seige. At dawn we went to the forest. The British police and the army came and we fought against them until late afternoon. When the clash began al-Qassam said to us, "die as martyrs". I don't know how many of them we killed. There was heavy fighting and the planes were above us, before noon Sheikh al-Qassam, Atifa al-Masri and Yusuf al Zibawi were all killed, and As'ad al Mifleh and Sheikh Nimr al-Sa'di were injured. Sheikh Nimr had twelve bullets in his chest and head but he did not die. After that we surrendered and we were arrested."³⁷

Khadir Said al-Hassan in whose father's house al-Qassam and his men stayed in Ya'bad, said that al-Qassam believed that informers had told the police about the group being in his father's house. His brother Ahmad was shot dead earlier that morning as he was taking breakfast to the Mujahideen, by the police who were approaching the village. According to Badawi, the police saw Ahmad with a rifle and shot him (though the rifle was not loaded). According to Khadir, Ahmads brother, the rifle was loaded and Ahmad fired once to warn the Mujahidin of the approaching police, and thus he was shot.³⁸ The news of the death of al-Qassam and the other three mujahidin spread quickly throughout the country, and their funeral in Haifa became a great and spontaneous

37. Arabi Badawi, Personal interview, 23/5/84, Qabalan, Nablus. The same story about the clash was repeated in interviews with:

1) 'Arif Mustafa Zayd, personal interview 21/5/1984. He was an eye-witness, Nazlat al-Sheikh Zayd

2) Mohammad al-Kylani, personal interview, 12/1/85 Ya'bad

3) Khadir Said al-Hassan, personal interview, 21/5/84, Nazlat al-Sheikh Zayd, Ya'bad.

38. Khadir Said al-Hassan. Interview 21/5/1984 Nazlat al-Sheikh Zayd, Ya'bad

demonstration against the British and the Zionists. The demonstrators demanded revenge and clashed with the police and troops.³⁹

al-Qassam's Ideology

al-Qassam as a leader can be seen from three perspectives: as a Muslim revivalist; as a nationalist, and as a man with class-consciousness. In the early 1920s al-Qassam with

another Syrian religious scholar, Sheikh Kamil al-Qassab, criticised the custom in Haifa and Acre of Muslim mourners chanting out loud al-Takbir and al-Tahlil while accompanying their dead to the cemetery, which they denounced this as bid'a (hateful innovation).⁴⁰ al-Qassam believed that the only way that Muslims could liberate themselves from the foreign occupation and to achieve progress would be by the revival of Islam.⁴¹ He also criticised the Islamic Supreme Council for spending money on decorating mosques and building hotels. He was quoted as saying :

"The jewels and the decorative implements in the mosques should be transformed into weapons. If you [the council] lost your land, how are the decorations going to help you, when they are on the walls?"⁴²

To al-Qassam religious values were to be transformed into revolutionary forms as a framework for armed revolt. He preached revolt through Islamic values, such as Jihad or self-sacrifice, and he succeeded in mixing nationalism with religion and in making fighting against colonialism a form of worship.

39. Akram Zueiter, al-Haraka al-Wataniya. Beirut, 1980, p.32

40. Abdullah Schleiffer, "The Life and Thought" In Islamic Quarterly (August 1981), p.67 and Samih Hammondeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. p68

41. Ibid p.63

42. Mohammad Adib Fakhr al-Din al-Qassam (Izz al-Din's nephew) in an interview by Ali Hussein Khalaf, in Jabla 6/12/81. Ali Hussein Khalaf, Tajribat al-Seikh al-Qassam. p.42

As a nationalist, al-Qassam believed that British colonialism was the cause of the Palestinian Arabs' problems, and that the British were the main enemy to be fought against, and that Zionism was a product of this colonialism: "the British were the snake's head, and Zionism its tail; cut the head off and the tail will wither away".⁴³ Most of his preaching was directed mainly against the British. He believed that the political leaders were incapable of leading the fight against the British and the Zionists,⁴⁴ as he saw that the political parties based on family affiliations, or the traditional religious institutions were not the framework which would be able to lead and direct the struggle. The only way to stop the establishment of the Jewish national home, al-Qassam believed, was an organised popular armed revolt. The people should be mobilized through the mosques, and should be trained to use weapons.⁴⁵

Although there were a few small groups adopting the armed struggle before al-Qassam, his movement was the first to adopt armed struggle with an ideology and an organised political framework. It was this which convinced many of his followers to continue the struggle after his death, and many were to become leaders in the revolt of 1936-39.

However, besides adapting of armed struggle and establishing his movement on an ideological basis by combining religion with nationalism, the most significant factor which made al-Qassam's movement stand out and outlast the political parties of that period was his class-consciousness, which led to his recruiting workers, dispossessed peasants and even ex-criminals, living in the shanty towns of Haifa. One such ex-criminal after being arrested in the Ya'bad clash described to his interrogators how he became a fighter with al-Qassam:

"I am from Balqis village. I used to steal and commit all sins forbidden in Islam. Then came al-Qassam, who taught me how to pray and led me to the right path. He forbade

43. Samih Hammoudeh, *al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra*. p60

44. *Ibid* p.60

45. Arabi Badawi, personal interview 23/5/84, Qabalan, Nablus

me from acting against the Islamic laws, Before a while (before 1935) he took me to the mountains of Balqis, and there he gave me a rifle. I asked what it was for and he said "to train with it and to fight the Jihad with your brothers".⁴⁶

al-Qassam believed that peasants and workers were closer to God, and thus made better fighters. According to 'Abd al-Ghanim al-Karmi, a journalist who asked al-Qassam why he concentrated on them, he said:

"My old age and long experience made me expect something good from peasants and workers. They have put their trust in God, and do believe in Heaven and the day of Judgement, and whoever has these qualities is more likely to sacrifice, and is more daring to go forward; besides they are stronger and more able to endure difficulties".⁴⁷

Peasants and workers were to suffer most from the British policy and the Jewish national home; thus they had an interest in seeing the British mandate stopped and the Jewish national home project ceased. These living in the shanty towns of Haifa, which were crowded and poor, were largely ignored by the traditional leadership. Under these circumstances, al-Qassam found a fertile soil for his teachings and preaching for armed struggle among people who had nothing to lose and everything to gain. His belief in them was proved correct after his death, when they formed the main body in the fighting force of the revolt of 1936-39, and many of them became leaders in the revolt.

al-Qassam and the Traditional leadership

In contrast to the angry, spontaneous and violent reaction of the Arab population to the death of al-Qassam, the reaction of the traditional leadership of the national movement was indifferent, and they declined to attend the funeral or even to send good-will messages to Haifa. Akram Zuieter of the al-Istiqlal party wrote in the al-Jami'a al-Arabiya

46. Hasan al-Bayer, as quoted in Filastin newspaper, Jaffa 23/11/1935, and as quoted by Samih Hammoudeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. p.53

47. as quoted by Samih Hammoudeh, al-wa'i Wa al-Thawra. p.54

newspaper denouncing the indifferent reaction of the leadership, both the Majlisi and the mu'arada factions:

"Why did the nation stand on one side regarding the death of al-Qassam and you stood on the other?. Why didn't you attend the funeral ?. Where are the good-will messages from the Grand Mufti, from Ragib al-Nashashibi, 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi and Hussein al-Khalidi?"⁴⁸

The position of the traditional leadership was recognised in a meeting place six days later after the death of al-Qassam between representatives of the five Arab political parties and the British High Commissioner, in which they submitted a memorandum and told him that:

"Unless they received a reply to their memorandum which could be generally regarded as giving satisfaction to their requests they would lose influence with their followers, extreme and irresponsible councils would prevail and the political situation would rapidly deteriorate."⁴⁹

The representatives of the political parties confirmed to the British that they were not in favour of such violent "extreme and irresponsible councils", and confirmed this by not attending al-Qassam's funeral. The strong reaction of the people to al-Qassam's death made the leadership realise, as Kayyali put it, that:

"They could not help feeling that Qassam's revolt was an indictment of their futile methods and that his selflessness contrasted with their selfish motives and pursuits."⁵⁰

They took the same position of double-standards as they had adopted during the 1929 uprising. While they hurried to dissociate themselves from the violence by not attending the funeral and meeting with the High Commissioner, they did attend the 40th day anniversary of al-Qassam's death and delivered enthusiastic speeches about the heroism of the man. Not only that, but some of them went as far as to claim that al-Qassam was a member of their party. Emil al-Ghoury claimed al-Qassam as a member of the Arab Party (formed by the al-Husseini faction) and that

48.al-Jami'ah al-Arabiya newspaper, 22/11/3

49.As quoted by Ghassan Kanafani, "Thawrat 1936-39", Shu'un Filastieniya. vol.6/7 p.62, and in Kayyali, Palestine A Modern History. p.182

50.A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p182

there had been secret talks between al-Qassam and some of his followers with the Mufti and some of the members of the national movement in Jerusalem, in which they had agreed upon a plan to "fight the enemy".⁵¹ al-Ghuri also claimed that the Mufti supported al-Qassam and had agreed to supply him with men, money and arms.⁵² There are no other sources that confirm the claims of al-Ghuri. In fact it could be judged from two recorded incidents between the Mufti and al-Qassam and indeed from the recollection of one of al-Qassam's followers, that the relation between the two was not good, and that the Mufti did not approve of the methods that al-Qassam was applying in his Jihad.

The first incident took place in the early twenties, when al-Qassam requested the Islamic Supreme Council, headed by the Mufti Haj Amin, to appoint him as a roving preacher for the council. This appointment would have given al-Qassam the opportunity to travel throughout the country without arousing the suspicion of the British authorities. Haj Amin never responded to the request.⁵³ The second incident, which was more widely reported, occurred in 1935 when al-Qassam sent one of his followers, Sheikh Mahmoud Salim, to inform the Mufti of his plans to commence the armed struggle and to request his support by declaring the revolt of the south, while al-Qassam declared it in the north. The Mufti did not approve and he replied that it was his belief that the situation could be addressed by political means, and that it was still premature to declare a revolt.⁵⁴ In fact the only connection between al-Qassam and the Arab party was their condemnation of the Balfour Declaration in Haifa

51. Emil al-Ghuri, in the Filastin bulletin, which was published by the Higher Arab Committee. Issue no.32, p10.

52. Emil al-Ghuri, Filastin 'Ibr Stin 'Aman. Beirut, 1972, pp.250-52

53. Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. p22

54. A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p.181 ; Arabi Badawi, personal interview 23/5/84 ; Samih Hammoudeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. p124 and Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. pp21-2.

at the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration in 1935 at which al-Qassam and Jamal al-Husseini shared the same platform.⁵⁵

Members of the al-Istiqlal party also claimed that al-Qassam was one of their members, Hamdi al-Husseini and Hashim al-Sab' published an article in the al Jami'a al-Arabiya newspaper after the death of al-Qassam, in which they listed the various positions and affiliations that he had held including his position as head of the Muslim Youth Association in Haifa and membership of the Haifa Branch of the al-Istiqlal Party.⁵⁶ However, Ajaj Nuwaihid, one of the founding members of the al-Istiqlal Party denied that al-Qassam had ever been a member. Furthermore, he declared that al-Qassam had not been a member of any party or group, and that he was totally independent.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, it is true that al-Qassam did have some dealings with various members of the Istiqlal Party, although this fact does not constitute membership of that party. He was a close friend of Rashid Haj Ibrahim, a prominent figure in Haifa, and of Sheikh Kamil al-Qassab, who, according to Subhi Yassin, was a supervisory member of the committee for propaganda set up by al-Qassam.⁵⁸ He also had relations with Subhi al-Khadra.⁵⁹

Although al-Qassam's organisation lasted only a short time, it nonetheless succeeded in creating a new awareness within the national struggle of the Palestinian Arabs in Palestine. Firstly it had embarked upon an alternative means of struggle and planted the seeds of armed revolt. Secondly it had proved that it was possible to create an alternative leadership for the struggle to the traditional leadership. This fact was most obvious during the revolt of 1936-39 when almost all leaders of the revolt remained independent of the traditional leadership in Damascus,

55. "Palestine Post", 2/11/35 p1 headline "Arabs Denounce Britain and Jews".

56. "Al-Jami'ah al-Arabiya", 22/11/1935

57. Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. p327

58. Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. p.23

59. Samih Hammoudeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. p.121.

in spite of the fact that they had maintained relations with and received support from the traditional leadership. Thirdly, its greatest influence was on the workers in the towns and the peasants in the rural areas, who began to believe in their own strength and their ability to change the political map of the national struggle, and to take the initiative in their own hands. This belief manifested itself during the revolt of 1936-39, when the vast majority of the fasa'il (units) commanders and regional commanders came from these two classes, the peasants especially.

al-Qassam's followers, who became known as Qassamites, continued the struggle immediately after his death, and played an important role in the revolt of 1936-39. Many became rebel commanders, such as Abu-Durra in the Jenin area, Abu-Khalid in the Silat al-Zahir area, Abu-Ibrahim al-Kabir in the Galilee area, and Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di in the Jenin-Haifa area.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Revolt of 1936-39: a Chronological Account

Background

Most studies on the history of Palestine under the British Mandate agree that the incident which took place on the 15th April 1936, in which a Jew was killed and another two injured in an ambush on the Nablus-Tulkarm road, marked the beginning of the 1936-39 revolt in Palestine.¹ These studies do not agree, however, on who carried out this attack. Subhi Yassin and Bayan al-Hout stated that it was a group of Qassamites led by Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di; Porath also agrees with them.² Other sources stated simply that it was an Arab band, without further details. Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, son of one of the most prominent leaders of the revolt, said that his father has led the attack on

¹ Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. pp.331-2; Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. p.30; Akram Zueiter *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.53 and Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, p.162

² Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. p.30 and Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. pp.331-2.

the Jewish convoy,³ while Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, son of another prominent leader, said his father had led the attack.⁴ However, from the recollection of one of 'Abd al-Rahim's followers, and the location and date of the incident, it is more likely that 'Abd al-Rahim was indeed the leader of the attack, as he was already operating in that area (which was close to his village) and at that period of time.⁵

In reprisal, two Arab workers were murdered in their huts the following night on the main road to the Petah Tekva settlement. The funeral of the Jew killed near Nablus led to angry Jewish demonstrations in Tel-Aviv, in which the demonstrators threatened to penetrate into Jaffa. These were followed by a series of assaults on Arabs in Tel-Aviv. Rumours began to circulate that more Arabs had been killed by Jews between Jaffa and Tel-Aviv.⁶ As a result, the Arabs declared a general strike which went on for six-months. During this period the armed revolt began which lasted for three years.

The April attack was not the first to be carried out by Palestinian Arabs against the Jews, nor were the clashes which followed as a result of the attack. In the 1929 uprising, for example, many Arabs and Jews had been killed and injured. However this and similar incidents did not develop into a fully fledged armed revolt. So the incident on the Nablus-Tulkarm road would not have been a strong enough reason on its own to start a three-year revolt resulting in thousands of casualties without the accumulation of many other and more important reasons. The incident near Nablus was merely the spark which started it.

3 Kamal Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, personal interview 9/4/85 in Tulkarm.

4 Faisal Arif Abd al-Raziq, personal interviews 2/2/85 and 20/4/85, al-Taybah, Triangle.

5 Shakir Milhim, personal assistant of Abd al-Rahim, personal interview 6/4/85. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm, and Kamal Yassin, personal interview 23/7/84, Tulkarm.

6 A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p.189; Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. pp.331-2; Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. p.30. and Report of the Royal Commission. p.96.

The Causes Behind the Revolt:

In its report into the events of 1936 the Royal Commission of Inquiry concluded:

"We have no doubt as to what were the underlying causes of the disturbances of the last year; they were: 1) The desire of the Arabs for national independence; and 2) Their hatred and fear of the establishment of the Jewish national home"⁷

In addition to the 'underlying causes' suggested by the Royal Commission, there were many other causes which contributed to the development of the situation into an armed revolt: the increased economic pressures on the Arab population with the building of the Jewish national home and their associated grievances; Palestinian Arab suspicion of the policy and intentions of the British towards Palestine; Arab mistrust of the methods and policies adopted by the traditional leadership of the national movement; the success of the national movements in Egypt and Syria in negotiating treaties with the Mandate powers in their countries, following national uprisings; and the rise in the level of political awareness among the Arab masses, with the spread of newspapers and political literature. However, perhaps the most significant factor determining the timing of the revolt was the movement of al-Qassam, his clash with the British police, and finally his death, which made the people realise the possibility of adopting armed struggle as an alternative means of achieving their national goals.

As detailed in chapter one, the Arab sector of the Palestine economy suffered many setbacks as a result of the process of creating the Jewish national home. Jewish immigration brought about a rapid and unbalanced growth of the population which was beyond the economic absorptive capacity of the country, and brought competition over

⁷ Report of the Royal Commission. p.80

employment with Arab workers, among whom unemployment had risen to an alarming rate in 1936. The unemployment rate in the towns of Ramallah, Bethlehem and Nazareth, for example, was estimated to have reached 75%.⁸ Jewish land purchase had led to a decrease in the amount of cultivable land available to Arab peasants, leading to thousands of them becoming landless. Arab peasants therefore harboured deep grievances against the Jewish national home, especially those who, as a result of Jewish land purchase, had been evicted from lands they had cultivated for generations. Peasant grievances were not based on purely economic grounds, but on social and national ones as well. Being uprooted from their lands meant to them not only losing their sole means of livelihood, but also losing a whole way of life and the social relations attached to it. As Ghassan Kanafani puts it:

"Agricultural life in the backward worlds in general, and in the Arab world, in particular, is not only a mode of production, but it also is equally a deep-rooted mode of social, religious and ritual life. Therefore, the clash (between Arabs and Jews) on this level is a clash that takes, in the first place, a form of pure national struggle."⁹

Another economic factor contributing to Arab peasant grievances was the inability of Arab industry to compete with the advanced, well-funded, skilled and mechanised Jewish industry, which had among other reasons, led to the decline of Arab industry. Important additions and factors, were the Mandate government's economic measures, which had caused the prices of local products to drop. While on the one hand it lifted the customs tariffs on some imported products, which helped Jewish industry (see chapter one), it had increased on the other hand, the custom dues on other products, so that in both ways the worst effects were felt by Arab producers and consumers. The customs dues on imported products had risen from 11% at the beginning of the Mandate

⁸ "The testimony of George Mansur 16/1/1937". p.294.

⁹ Ghassan Kanafani, "Thawrat 1936" *Shu'un Filastiniya*, vol.6-7 No. (January 1972) p.51

to 26% in 1935. For example, the custom tax on sugar had reached 100%, on tobacco 149%, on gasoline 208%, on matches 400%, and on coffee 26% /¹⁰

All the above reasons had led the Palestinian Arabs to believe that the Mandate Administration was the main cause of the deterioration in the economic conditions of the Arab sector- by their assistance in the development of the Jewish national home, and by their deliberate imposition of economic policies which would inevitably lead to the decline of the Arab economy and the eventual domination of the Jewish economy. Bashir Ibrahim, a farmer who joined the revolt to become a judge in the rebel courts, firmly believes that British policy was deliberately aimed at driving the Arab peasants to sell their lands to the Jews, and that it was these policies that provoked the Arabs to revolt:

"The British government did not treat the Arabs and Jews on an equal basis. There were differences in the government's services, in giving economic concessions, in giving jobs, and in applying the law. They made roads to the Jewish settlements, supplied them with electricity and water, while our villages were neglected. Economically the government would buy from abroad the same crops which we produce in any season and sell it cheaply, so that we would become bankrupt and be forced to sell our lands, and who would have the money and be ready to buy our lands? The Jews, of course. That's why we hate the British and believe that they were the main cause of our misery. They wanted to give our country to the Jews, to make their national home here, and bring over more immigrants, and push us out. That's why we started to prepare for the revolt"¹¹

The Palestinian Arab distrust of the British ability to carry out their promises, and their uncertainty concerning the real intentions of the Mandate Power in the country, were some of the 'subsidiary' causes of the revolt, as suggested by the Royal Commission of Inquiry:

"The growth of Arab distrust in His Majesty's Government's ability and will to carry out promises; the general uncertainty, accentuated by the ambiguity of

10 Ibid. p53.

11 Bashir Ahmad Ibrahim, personal interview 15/7/84, Zeita, Tulkarm.

certain phrases in the Mandate, as to the ultimate intentions of the Mandatory Power"¹²

Since the start of their administration of Palestine, the British had never offered the Palestinian Arabs a clear policy regarding their intentions towards the future of the country, and its predominately Arab population whereas their support of the Jewish national home had been clear. Instead, the British had published Statements of Policy which failed to give clear responses to the demands of the Arab national movement, and had sent commissions of inquiry which repeatedly concluded that violent uprisings in Palestine were caused by the Arab rejection of the Balfour Declaration and the Jewish national home. The British Government in London and the Mandate Government in Palestine had done nothing to address or redress the Arab grievances; instead they suggested the establishment of Legislative Councils, Consultative Councils and an Arab Agency, parallel to that of the Jewish Agency. These suggestions were refused by the Arabs, as they regarded them as an attempt to evade the three main demands of the national movement: the cessation of Jewish immigration, the prohibition of Arab land transfer to the Jews, and the establishment of a democratic government based on the majority of the population.

Another major factor which led the masses to turn to armed revolt was their mistrust of the methods and policies adopted by the leadership of the national movement. These had proved futile and had failed to achieve any national goals. The dilemma in which the national leadership found itself on the eve of the revolt added to the mistrust of the masses. The leadership had no clear policy for leading the struggle against Zionism. Apart from sending letters of complaint and protests against the Jewish national home to the British Governments in Palestine and London, they had not decided upon or taken any further practical steps

12 Report of The Royal Commission. pp.110-112.

to fend off the dangers of Zionist Colonisation. Neither did they have a clear policy towards the British. They simply sought to maintain friendly relations with the British officials, hoping that their sending of letters of protest and delegations to London, or delivering memorandums of demands, would be sufficient to dissuade the British from supporting the Zionists, and to persuade them to grant the Arabs their national demands. But these measures proved unsuccessful. At the same time the traditional leadership realised that, were they to maintain the same policy they had pursued for the past nineteen years, they would eventually lose all influence. The dilemma was most acute after the death of al-Qassam and the visit of the representatives of the Palestinian political parties to the British High Commissioner, in which they expressed their fear of losing influence over the masses unless they received a satisfactory reply to yet another memorandum of demands, which they presented to the High Commissioner.* This fear, was also felt by the High Commissioner, who preferred to deal with the traditional leadership, rather than with more radical groups which might become more influential as the political situation approached an impasse. In his letter to the Colonial Secretary, the High Commissioner outlined his assessment of the situation a few months before the start of the revolt, stating that the Arab leaders were:

"... right in saying that otherwise they will lose such influence as they possess and that the possibility of alleviating the present situation by means of moderate measures suggested by me will disappear"¹³

The position of the leadership therefore accelerated the development of the circumstances into an armed revolt, although at the beginning they chose not to play any role in it.

Political literature also played a significant role in the preparation of the masses for an armed revolt, and in developing their political

* See Chapter Three

13 A letter from High Commissioner Wauchope to J.H. Thomas, Colonial Secretary, 7/12/1935, CO. 733/294

consciousness. Between 1904 and 1922 there were 50 newspapers in Palestine, and another ten were published before the revolt. These newspapers had participated in presenting political ideas, and in providing a platform for political radicals.¹⁴ They also played a role in the agitation of the population, especially after the death of al-Qassam, by presenting him as a national hero, and by their pronouncements during the clashes which followed the incident near Nablus. The Nationalists also played a significant role in newspaper articles, in which some of their most prominent poets, such as Ibrahim Tuqan, 'Abd al-Rahim Mahmoud, and 'Abd al-Karim al-Karmi, praising the armed struggle in their poetry, criticising the traditional leadership for being unable to adopt a more effective policy, and voicing their opposition to land sales to the Jews.¹⁵

However, it is important to note that it was not only printed literature and educated poets which played an important role in public agitation, but also, and more importantly, popular poets and their work. Popular poets roamed throughout the rural areas, singing their poetry in a language which was simple enough to recite and spread. The most prominent of these poets was Nouh Ibrahim, whose songs were known and recited in almost every part of the country.¹⁶

Events in Egypt and Syria helped fire the nationalistic sentiments of the Palestinians. The winter of 1935-36 witnessed a new tide of nationalist agitation in Egypt and Syria, which among other things had led to negotiations being held, which culminated in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty Alliance of 2nd of March 1936. In Syria, the growing power of the nationalist block led to an uprising and general strike which lasted 50

14 Ghassan Kanafani, "Thawrat 1936-39", *Shu'un Filastiniya*, vol. 6-7 No.6. (January 1972), p.55

15 Ibid. pp56-59

16 Nouh Ibrahim, joined the revolt in the Galilee area, and his songs played a part in keeping high morale among the rebels. Many of Ibrahim's songs are still being sung today in occupied Palestine.

days. As a result on the 1st day of March 1936 the French Government announced its decision to negotiate a treaty with the Syrians.¹⁷ These victories of the Egyptian and Syrian national movements inspired the Palestinian nationalists, and represented an additional determining factor for the revolt. As mentioned in the Royal Commission's report:

"These developments in Egypt and Syrian were bound to stimulate nationalist-independence agitation in Palestine... It is only to be expected that Palestinian Arabs should thus envy and seek to emulate their successful fellow nationalists in these countries just across their northern and southern boundaries."¹⁸

Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, who was a member of a secret group in Jerusalem during the revolt, summarizes well the conditions leading to the revolt;

"Apart from the al-Qassam movement, there were other reasons for the creation of a revolutionary atmosphere in Palestine - the Balfour Declaration; Jewish immigration; land sales; the feeling of fear that the Jewish state would be established and that this would lead to the loss of the land; the fear of the armed Jewish formations which had been organising since 1929, such as the Haganah; the smuggling of arms by the Jews into the country; and the failure of the 1933 uprising in spite of its widespread effectiveness".¹⁹

17 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, Palestine Diary. p.258

18 Report of The Royal Commission. pp.93-94

19 Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview 5/5/85, Amman, Jordan.

The Revolt:

The First Phase-The Strike 1936

On the 19th April 1936, following the clashes between Arabs and Jews, especially in Jaffa, and the seeming deterioration of the situation, a number of nationalists, many of whom were members of the dissolved Istiqlal Party, and were politically active as individuals, met in Nablus to discuss the situation in Palestine.²⁰ Their aim was to decide how to take stronger and more organised political action, since it was evident from the clashes and the demonstrations that the people were ready to take a more radical action than had been taken before. At This meeting, it was agreed to form a committee to organise national action. This was called al-Lajna al-Qawmiya (the National Committee). It was also agreed that Nablus would start a general strike until the demands of the Arabs were conceded, and that other towns and villages should follow suit by declaring a general strike and forming national committees to supervise the strike and lead the people. ²¹ In the following days, national committees were formed in most towns and villages throughout Palestine, and a general strike was declared throughout the country. ²²

On the 25th April, delegations from various parts of the country met in Jerusalem to discuss what had to be done next, and it was decided to form a committee to assume control over the events. Thus al-Lajna al-

20 This meeting took place at Ahmad al-Shak'ah's soap factory, attended by: Akram Zueiter, Sulaiman Tuqan, Mustafa Bushnaq, Ahmad al-Shak'ah, Tahir al-Masri, Wasif Kamal, Mamdouh al-Sukhn and Hikmat al-Masri. Akram Zueiter, al-Haraka al-Wataniya. p.60

21 Ibid. pp62-64.

22 Akram Zueiter, Watha'iq al-Haraka. Documents No. 231 and 233, pp.412-414

Arabiya al-'Ulya (the Higher Arab Committee) was formed, headed by Haj Amin al-Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem, and consisting of ten members representing the six political parties and the religious sectors of the community. The Husseini faction had three members in this committee; in addition to the Mufti, there were Jamal al-Husseini of the Palestinian Arab Party and Alfred Rok, a member of the same party as well as a representative of the Greek Catholic Christians. The Nashashibi faction had two members in the Committee, Raghib al-Nashashibi of the National Defence Party, and Ya'qub Farraj, who also represented the Greek Orthodox Christians. The Istiqlalists also had two seats in the committee, 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi, who was named as general secretary, and Ahmad Hilmi 'Abd al-Baqi who was the treasurer of the committee. In addition there were three other members representing the three other parties, Ya'qub al-Ghusayn from the Youth Congress Party, Dr. Hussein al-Khalidi of the Reform Party, and 'Abd al-Latif Salah from the National Block Party.²³

This balance succeeded in bringing together the rival families, giving the impression of a united front under the umbrella of the Higher Arab Committee. However, in spite of its representative authority, and its apparent coherence, this committee was not the leading force of the people during the months of the strike. According to Bayan al-Hout, "the Higher Arab Committee was no more than an official spokesman, in the modern political dictionary".²⁴ The strike was actually led and organised by the National Committees of the various areas. It was they who took over responsibility for the strike and formed sub-committees for fund-raising, relief, the promotion of national industries and products, and legal and medical services, in order to support the people in their effort to maintain the strike.²⁵

23 Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'ssasat*. p.336

24 Ibid. p336

25 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History*. p.190

There were three main reasons which made the National Committees more important than the Higher Arab Committee in the organisation of the strike. First, the structure of the Higher Arab Committee, consisting of rival factions, was a hindrance to decision-taking and the promotion of policies (the same reason which paralysed the executive committee of the Seventh Congress and rendered it unable to decide on or pursue a policy). Secondly, the National Committees were financially independent, giving them the freedom to take their own decisions according to their own judgments in their areas without the interference of the Higher Arab Committee, or financial pressure from them. Thirdly, the National Committees were chosen by the people in each area, and their working among them gave them the trust of the people. This also gave them the ability to take decisions and make policies according to the needs of their areas, and without going back to the Higher Arab Committee (which was in Jerusalem). In fact, it was the Higher Arab Committee which consulted the National Committees before making any decision, and not the reverse.²⁶

On the 26th April 1936, the Higher Arab Committee issued its first communique, in which it requested people to continue the strike until national demands had been conceded.²⁷

On the 7th of May representatives of the National Committees of all areas in Palestine met at a conference in Jerusalem to discuss the political situation, and unanimously decided to stop payment of all taxes as from the 15th of May if the government did not radically change its policy, starting with the cessation of Jewish immigration. The representatives also reiterated the three main demands of the national movement: 1) the immediate stopping of Jewish immigration; 2) the

26 Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. p.190

27. Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. p.32

prohibition of transfer of Arab land to the Jews; and 3) the establishment of a national government responsible to a representative council.²⁸

The reaction of the British authorities towards the strike was to impose emergency law, which commenced on the second day of the strike. This law was imposed until 18th October 1937, and was replaced by martial law when the revolt became stronger. They began to arrest national activists on a large scale. In May 1936, 61 activists and strike organisers were arrested, and many leaders of the National Committees were exiled to 'Uja al-Hafir in the South of Palestine. Of the activists who were arrested were Akram Zueiter, Izzat Darwazah, and 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi, the three were Istiqlalists.²⁹ Other measures were taken by the authorities including the demolishing of houses in villages and towns. They ordered the destruction of a substantial part of the old city of Jaffa, resulting in the demolition of 250 houses, thus rendering about 6000 person homeless. At the same time 825 wooden 'barracks' homes of a further 4000 people were demolished in other parts of the town.³⁰ Searches were conducted throughout the villages to find and arrest the wanted rebels and confiscate their arms.³¹

The Armed Revolt

After the death of al-Qassam in November 1935, the political situation never returned to normal. It could be stated, as a matter of fact, that the armed revolt had actually started with the clash in Ya'bad. Those of al-Qassam's men who were not arrested immediately formed armed guerrilla groups who took to the mountains and began to launch guerrilla warfare against British personnel and installations cutting

28 Akram Zueiter, *Watha'iq al-Haraka*. Document No.243, p.428
29 Akram Zueiter, *Al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. pp.112-122
30 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. pp.261-2
31 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine A Modern History*. p.281

telephone lines, and ambushing army and police patrols and convoys on the main roads. As well as launching attacks against Jewish settlements, al-Qassam's followers also began a warfare against collaborators.³² The best known of these operations was the killing of Ahmad Naif of the Palestine Police who had played a major role in the investigation of the al-Qassam movement, leading the Police to Ya'bad and to the clash which resulted in the death of al-Qassam and three of his followers.³³

During the strike, armed units began to form in almost all parts of the country, and the rebels grew in numbers. In the Tulkarm area, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad formed a group of armed men and began to attack the British army and Police convoys on the roads to Nablus and Jenin.³⁴ Shakir Milhim, who was personal assistant to 'Abd al-Rahim, recalls how the group began to form and operate:

"First there was the strike. Everybody joined in the strike. Then we began to hear of some people who had obtained guns, and then how four or five of them went to the road and ambushed the army convoy on its way to Jenin. After that, the British who knew who the attackers were, started to look for them. They came to my house many times looking for 'Abd al-Rahim, and since then he never slept in his house in Dhinnabah. People started to gather around him, joining the revolt, and little by little they became a large group"³⁵

Another group was formed which operated both in the Tulkarm area and the South by 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq.³⁶

In the Jenin area a few other groups were formed. One was formed by Sheikh 'Atiya, a Qassamite from Balad al-Sheikh near Haifa, and this operated in the area between Jenin and Haifa.³⁷ Another rebel group in the area was led by Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di, a Qassamite.³⁸ In the

32 Samih Hammoudeh, *al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra*. p.100

33 Ibid. p117

34 Ziyad 'Udeh, 'Abd al-Rahim al-Haj Mohammad, *al-Zarqa-Jordan* pp15-16.

35 Shakir Milhim, personal interview 6/4/1985, Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

36 Kayed Bal'um. Bodyguard of Arif Abd al-Raziq. Personal interview 22/4/85 al-Taybah, Triangle.

37 Samih Hammoudeh, *al-Wa'i Wa al Thawra*. p.107

38 Ibid pp 101-104

village of Arrabah, near Jenin, Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, formed an armed group which later operated closely with al-Qawuqji, the commander of the rebel forces, in the Jenin-Nablus-Tulkarm area.

In the north of Palestine and the Galilee area many rebel groups were formed under the leadership of certain Qassamites, such as Khalil Mohammad Issa (Abu Ibrahim al-Kabir) who became the leading commander of the Galilee area,³⁹ and 'Abdullah al-Asbah, who became a regional commander in the upper Galilee area.⁴⁰ In Jerusalem a few secret armed groups were formed which launched attacks against British targets and personnel.⁴¹ Rebel groups were also formed in Gaza and as far south as Beersheba.⁴²

The names of the rebel leaders soon became known to the people as the news of their operations quickly spread throughout the country. Each of these leaders operated in their regions independently of one another, and they were also independent of the Higher Arab Committee. They were, however, in contact with the National Committees in their regions, who helped them with supplies and collected money to buy arms.⁴³

al-Qawuqji:

The organisation and military skills of the rebels improved with the arrival in August 1936 of a number of Arab volunteers from Iraq, Syria and Trans-Jordan, led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji, a Syrian officer in the Iraqi army. Porath claims that the Iraqi-Palestine Defence Committee convinced al-Qawuqji to go to Palestine and to assume the command of the force of the Arab volunteers, as a fulfillment of the obligation taken

39 Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. p.48

40 Ibid p.48

41 Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/85, Amman, Jordan and 'Aboudeh Ghaith, personal interview 16/3/85, Jerusalem.

42 'Ali 'Ukshiya, personal interview, 20/3/85. Gaza.

43 Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. p.212

by the Iraqi Parliamentary delegation which visited Palestine in March 1936.⁴⁴

However, al-Qawuqji apparently was not in need of convincing to come to Palestine, as he did have contacts with some Palestinian and Syrian nationalists to come to Palestine if he was needed. Akram Zueiter was one of those who had such a contact with al-Qawuqji; he quoted from a letter sent to him by al-Qawuqji, dated 16/4/36, in which al-Qawuqji said:

".....I wish you success, and if needed I will be there even before you ask....."⁴⁵

Nabih al-'Azmeah, the exiled Syrian nationalist in Jerusalem, and his brother 'Adel al-'Azmeah, who lived in Amman, also had contact with al-Qawuqji regarding the latter's coming to Palestine. In his diary, Akram Zueiter wrote on the 2nd of August 1936, that Nabih al-'Azmeah, who was then with him in Sarafand prison camp, had told him that his brother 'Adel al-'Azmeah was negotiating with al-Qawuqji to come to Palestine and lead the armed revolt. Akram himself received a letter from a friend in Baghdad, telling him that al-Qawuqji had resigned from his job and would be coming to Palestine.⁴⁶

Fawzi al-Qawuqji arrived in Palestine on the 22nd of August 1936. Upon his arrival he assumed the leadership of the rebel forces, and on the 28th of August he issued his first communique bearing the title 'The General Command of the Arab Revolt - Southern Syria (Palestine)', and signed Fawz al-Din al-Qawuqji, 'the Commander in-Chief of the Revolt of Southern Syria'.⁴⁷ His mobile headquarters were located in the Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm areas, which became known during the revolt as the 'Triangle of Terror'. On the 2nd of September al-Qawuqji, according to Porath, had a meeting with six commanders of the largest rebel groups;

44 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian National Movement*. pp. 188-189.

45 Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. pp.54-55

46 *Ibid.* pp143-146

47 Akram Zueiter, *Wathaiq al-Haraka*, Document No. 257-8

'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di, Sheikh 'Atiya Mohammad 'Awad, Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, and Mohammad al-Salih. At this meeting he accepted from them a written declaration in which they recognised him as the Commander-in-Chief of the Arab Revolt in Palestine.⁴⁸

al-Qawuqji organised the rebel forces and divided them into four fighting units and an intelligence unit. The fighting units were 1) a Palestinian unit lead by Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, 2) an Iraqi unit, under the command of Jasim 'Ali, an Iraqi volunteer who entered Palestine with al-Qawuqji, 3) a Syrian unit under the command of Sheikh Mohammad al-Ashmar, who came with al-Qawuqji with the Syrian volunteers, 4) a Druze unit led by Hamad Sa'b, a Druze from Lebanon. The intelligence unit was headed by Munir al-Rayis, a Syrian journalist. He had also led a fighting unit during the Babl'a battle. Later the main responsibility of this unit was to gather information and to publish communiques and announcements to then public.⁴⁹

During the first battle of the Arab rebel joint forces and the British, near the village of Bal'a near Tulkarm on the 3rd of September 1936, al-Qawuqji was disappointed with the Palestinian rebels, who retreated from the battle ground . However, this behaviour represented not so much a fear of fighting as a display of mistrust towards al-Qawuqji. Some of the rebels were suspicious of him, deferring their trust; some feared that he was a British spy, sent by Major John Bagot Glubb (or Abu Hnaiyk, as the Palestinians and Trans Jordanians used to call him), who was then the Commander of the Trans-Jordan Desert Patrol Force, to reveal the position of the rebels and to lead them into a battle with the British troops in which they would be trapped.⁵⁰ This belief was repeated

48 Porath, *The Palestinian National Movement*. pp.188-9

49Yusuf Rajab al-Radi'i, *Thawrat 1936-39*, Beirut, 1982, pp47-48

50 Munir al-Rayis, *al-Kitab al-Dhababi*, Damascus, 1976, p.235

by three of the rebels who were in Bal'a during that battle⁵¹. Bashir Ibrahim who fought in the battle explains the Palestinian rebel position:

"In the first battle al-Qawuqji fought with Palestinians, the Palestinian rebels fired few bullets and started to withdraw. He thought that the rebels did not want to face the planes which the British were using in that battle. But the truth was that the rebels did not trust him, and they wanted to test him, so they left him and his volunteers to fight the battle and watched them. Eight of his men were killed. In the next battle, the Palestinian rebels gathered a large force and proved to him that they were not afraid of planes." ⁵²

Munir al-Rayis, head of one of the fighting volunteer units during the Bal'a battle, said about the Palestinian rebels' withdrawal:

"We were told that the reason behind the withdrawal of Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi and his band without any warning in the first few hours of the battle, thus opening a breach for the enemy in our defence line, was not only that the band ran out of ammunition, but also the arrival of big reinforcements to the enemy in the battle, and the fear that the British troops together with al-Qawuqji's forces would surround 'Abd al-Hadi's band and annihilate them"⁵³

However, it is unlikely that Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi and his men were the ones who withdrew from the battle. As he had good relations with al-Qawuqji following the latter's arrival in Palestine, and as he was the main Palestinian contact for al-Qawuqji with the Palestinian rebels, it is likely that al-Rayis mentioned him in particular because Fakhri was perhaps the Palestinian rebel leader best known to him (he does not mention in his book the names of any other Palestinian leaders), especially given that Fakhri was appointed by al-Qawuqji as the head of the Palestinian rebel forces.

al-Qawuqji himself mentioned this incident in his memoirs:

"None of the Palestinians was injured in this battle. As they were not used to this sort of fighting, they withdrew from their positions in the first hour of the battle. The

51 Bahjat Abu-Gharbyia, personal interview, 5/5/85 Amman; Bashir Ahmad Ibrahim, personal interview 15/7/84, Zeita, Tulkarm and Shakir Milhim personal interview, 6/4/85, Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

52 Bashir Ahmad Ibrahim, personal interview 15/7/84, Zeita, Tulkarm.

53 Munir al-Rayis, al-Kitab al-Dhahabi. p.235

abandonment by the Palestinians of their posts was not due to cowardice, but because as I have said, they were not used to this sort of fighting. The courage and sacrifice they showed later in other battles... is the biggest and clearest proof of what I said".⁵⁴

Despite the set-back during the battle of Bal'a caused by the withdrawal of the Palestinian rebels, it was a military success for al-Qawuqji and the rebels, for it lasted over six hours, and during it the rebels showed better organisation, and more advanced military skills.⁵⁵

According to the British authorities' official announcement, the British casualties in this battle were three killed, including the pilot of one plane that was shot down by the rebels, and four injured, one of whom was in a critical condition. The rebels casualties according to the same announcement, were thought to have been ten rebels killed and six injured.⁵⁶ However, according to Akram Zueiter, who was quoting Communique no.3 issued by al-Qawuqji on the battle of Bala', the rebels lost nine killed, all of whom were from the Arab volunteers.⁵⁷ Subhi Yassin, on the other hand, estimated the number of rebels killed in this battle to have been 15, nine of whom were from the Arab volunteers and the remaining six Palestinian rebels. ⁵⁸

As the general strike continued, and with the repeated rebel attacks as well as their developing skills and growing numbers, the British authorities determined to stop the strike and the armed revolt. Military reinforcements were brought to the country, with Lieutenant-General J.G. Dill taking the Supreme Command of the military forces.⁵⁹

The first clash between the forces of Lt-General Dill and the rebel forces led by al-Qawuqji took place in the village of Jaba' near Jenin

54 Khairiya Qasmiya, (ed.) Filastin Fi Mudhakkarat al-Qawuqji, Beirut, 1975, p.26

55 Rajab al-Radi'i, Thawrat 1936. p.66

56 Akram Zueiter, Watha'iq al-Haraka. Document No. 259, pp.453-5, and a letter from the High Commissioner Sir Arthur Wauchope to the Colonial Office, Cable No. 679, 3/9/36, Co. 733/310/75528

57 Akram Zueiter, al-Haraka al-Wataniya. p.166

58 Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. p.133

59 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, Palestine Diary. p.265.

where al-Qawuqji was stationed with a force of about four hundred men. The British authorities, who had been notified of the rebels' presence, brought forces from both Jenin and Nablus and surrounded the area. The rebels in forcing their way out clashed with the British for more than an hour, and a number of rebels were killed or injured. Reinforcements for the rebels then arrived from the surrounding villages. After withdrawing to the mountain of Yasid nearby, the rebels gained the initiative and attacked the British forces, leaving forty of their own men dead and a further twenty wounded. al-Qawuqji had escaped death or arrest, and thus thwarted the main aim of the British attack.⁶⁰

The third large battle between the rebels, led by al-Qawuqji, and the British troops, was on the 29th September 1936, along a front of thirteen kilometers between the mountains of Silat al-Zahir and Beit Imrin near Nablus. It lasted for eight hours and the British withdrew at nightfall.⁶¹

The Battle of Beit Imrin was the last which al-Qawuqji led in Palestine during the revolt. He left Palestine after the decision of the Higher Arab Committee to call off the strike and to stop the revolt. al-Qawuqji issued his last communique before leaving Palestine (No.20), asking the rebels to cease operations, but to keep their weapons ready.⁶²

Between June and August 1936, Prince 'Abdullah of Trans- Jordan twice attempted to convince the Higher Arab Committee to call off the strike, but did not succeed. This attempt was repeated by Nuri al-Said, the Iraqi Prime Minister, who volunteered to be a mediator between the British and the Higher Arab Committee on this issue. The Higher Arab

60 Hasan Haj Ibrahim, personal interview 3/4/84; Maythalun, Jenin. An eye-witness to the battle and Subi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. pp133-4

61 Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/85, Amman. Hussein Badawi, personal interview, 8/4/85. Aqqaba, Jenin, Abdul Aziz Shamaliya, personal interview, 30/5/84, Silat al-Zhahir, Jenin, and communique no. 11, issued by al-Qawuqji, in Akram Zueiter, Wathaiq al-Haraka. Document No. 257, p.45

62. Communique No. 20 issued by al-Qawuqji in Akram Zueiter, Wathaiq al-Haraka. Document No. 257, p451

Committee showed their readiness to call off the strike if so requested by the Arab leaders. ⁶³ On the 10th October identical appeals were issued to the Palestinian people by King Ghazi of Iraq, Prince 'Abdullah of Trans-Jordan, and King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud of Saudi-Arabia, to call off the strike, to discontinue the revolt, and to "rely on the good intentions of our friend Great Britain who has declared that she will do justice"⁶⁴

The following day the Higher Arab Committee responded to these appeals and issued a statement to call off the strike. ⁶⁵ The Arab Kings and Prince had negotiated with the British thus and persuaded the Higher Arab Committee to call off the strike on the following basis:

- 1) The Higher Arab Committee will issue a statement to stop the strike and the revolt.
- 2) Jewish immigration will temporarily cease until the Royal Commission of Inquiry (which was due to come to Palestine in November) investigates the 'disturbances', and concludes its report.
- 3) The Iraqi government will continue its discussions with the British government on Palestinian demands and rights.
- 4) The revolt will end on condition that the British stop collective fines and searches, free those taken prisoners, and pardon all those who were charged during the revolt. ⁶⁶

From the outset relations between al-Qawuqji and the Higher Arab Committee and, in particular, with Haj Amin al-Husseini, were not on the best of terms, and it appears that the Mufti was behind the

63 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History*. p.200

64 Akram Zueiter, *Wathaiq al-Haraka*. Document No. 261, the Appeals of the Arab Kings, p458.

65 Ibid. Document 263, p459

66 Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. pp.37-38.

decision taken by al-Qawuqji to leave the country after the statement of the Higher Arab Committee to call off the strike was announced.

In a meeting which took place two years later between Akram Zueiter and al-Qawuqji, the latter told Zueiter that he was driven to leave Palestine because the political leadership realised that if he were to remain, negotiations (to end the strike) would be delayed, and any possibility of solving the problems would be endangered. He thought that the Mufti did not want him there. ⁶⁷

However, the success of the negotiations was not the only reason for the Mufti wanting to get rid of al-Qawuqji. On the one hand, the Mufti was aware of the popularity of al-Qawuqji among the Palestinian people, especially after the last battles between the rebels led by him and the British troops, and he was aware of his ability to organise and train the rebels, thus considerably strengthening the revolt. It was this ability that led the Mufti to fear that the armed struggle option would prevail and that his policy of political settlement would fail. On the other hand, it seems that the Mufti was opposed to al-Qawuqji on a personal level, he feared that al-Qawuqji's ambitions and popularity might lead him to declare himself as a leader, thus endangering the positions of the Mufti as well as the political leadership of the Palestinian population.⁶⁸ Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya mentioned an incident he witnessed which confirms this point-of-view, and the fact that al-Qawuqji regarded himself to a certain as a leader:

"al-Qawuqji was not on friendly terms with Haj Amin. He once sent a letter to Haj Amin through me requesting that all the money coming to Palestine in support of the revolt should be sent to him, and not to Haj Amin, as he (al-Qawuqji) was the leader of the revolt."⁶⁹

Porath claims that al-Qawuqji was more inclined towards the Nashashibi faction, pointing out that his first connections in the country

67 Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.358

68 Khairiya Qasmiya (ed.) *Filastin Fi Mudhakkarat al-Qawaqji*. p55

69 Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/85 Amman.

were established through two pro- Nashashibi families in the Jenin and Nablus areas, and that he had appointed his deputy Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi from another pro-Nashashibi family. ⁷⁰ However, all al-Qawuqji's connections and arrangements to come to Palestine were through nationalist Istiqlalists, such as 'Adel al-'Azmeah who was a Syrian nationalist living in Amman, and his brother Nabih al-'Azmeah who was in prison in Palestine, and Akram Zueiter, and it is very unlikely that al-Qawuqji changed his affiliations as soon as he arrived in Palestine. It is possible that the appointment of Fakhri as his deputy was made not because Fakhri was a pro-Nashashibi, but rather because he had one of the largest rebel groups in the Nablus region and was therefore influential in that area.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry

On the 11th of November 1936, the Royal Commission of Inquiry headed by Lord Peel arrived in Palestine, and on the 16th November it began its investigations into the causes of violence in the country.

In reaction to the announcement by the Colonial Secretary in the House of Commons of the government's decision not to suspend Jewish immigration during the course of the Royal Commission's investigations, The Higher Arab Committee decided to boycott the commission,⁷¹ though the Nashashibi faction did not support the boycott. However, once again the Arab Kings intervened in order to persuade the Higher Arab Committee to abandon the proposed boycott and present their case to the Royal Commission. As a result, on the 6th January 1937, the Higher Arab Committee decided to abandon the boycott and to give evidence at the inquiry.

70 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.191
71 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. pp.266-7

On the 7th July 1937, the Royal Commission's Report was published together with the government's official announcement of its acceptance in principle of the Commission's recommendations. The chief recommendation given by the Commission as a solution to the Palestine problem was to abandon the Mandate and divide the country into three sections: 1) an Arab state, comprising those areas of Palestine predominantly Arab 2) a Jewish state comprising those areas predominantly Jewish and 3) a third section

containing the strategic or religious areas of Palestine, namely Jerusalem and an enclave from Jerusalem to Jaffa under British administration.⁷²

The Jews immediately rejected the partition scheme put forward by the Royal Commission. At the Twentieth Zionist Congress, which met in Zurich to discuss the scheme, a majority of 300 to 158 members voted for rejection, declaring themselves, however, prepared to discuss a definite plan for the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine. A minority rejected the principle of partition altogether.⁷³

On the 8th July 1937 the Higher Arab Committee also announced its rejection of the partition scheme⁷⁴ And on the 23rd July the Higher Arab Committee submitted a memorandum to the Permanent Mandates Commission and the Secretary of State for the Colonies explaining their reasons for the rejection of the Partition Plan, and expressing the disappointment of the Arabs of Palestine. They stated that the only solution was to recognise the rights of the Arabs to complete independence in their own land; to cease the scheme of the Jewish National Home, to bring the Mandate to an end, and to replace the Mandate by a treaty similar to that existing between Britain and Iraq,

72 Report of the Royal Commission. pp.380-396

73 N. Barbour and D. Warriner, *Nisi Dominus*. p.184

74 Raghīb al-Nashashibi and Ya'qub Farraj resigned from the Higher Arab Committee, as they had intended to accept the Partition Plan encouraged by Prince Abdullah of Trans-Jordan who accepted the plan. Both men were members of the Defence Party.

Britain and Egypt and between France and Syria, thus creating a sovereign state in Palestine. Furthermore, they demanded the immediate cessation of Jewish immigration. ⁷⁵

The Palestinian people were strongly opposed to the partition scheme, especially those in Galilee which had been included in the proposed Jewish state. There was a general feeling of readiness to continue the armed revolt, particularly after the British authorities attempted to arrest Haj Amin, the Grand Mufti on the 17th July 1937. However, he took refuge in the al-Aqsa Mosque and later managed to escape to Damascus and from there to Lebanon ⁷⁶ The members of the Higher Arab Committee were arrested and some of them were exiled to the Seychelles Islands.

The Revolt, the Second Stage 1937-38

During the investigations of the Royal Commission the revolt did not cease completely. There were several attacks and sabotage operations, but the rebels concentrated mainly on pursuing collaborators. ⁷⁷ In addition the rebels made efforts to recruit more men, organise their units, collect money and procure more arms. After the publication of the Royal Commission report and the subsequent disappointment of the people, in addition to the arrest of most of the Higher Arab Committee members and the attempt to arrest the Mufti, the revolt resumed full-scale operations.

75 Higher Arab Committee, Memorandum, 23/7/37, the Commercial Press, Jerusalem, 1937.

76 Zuhair Mardini, Filastin Wa al-Haj Amin. Beirut, 1986, pp.99-100.

77 On 15/4/37 the rebels killed Halim Bastah, deputy head of the northern district police. He was renowned for his brutality and was the main interrogator of the followers of al-Qassam upon their arrest after the clash and death of al-Qassam.

The first of the rebel operations to alert the British authorities to the resumption of the armed revolt was the successful assassination on the 25th September 1937 of Andrews, the British Acting District Commissioner of Galilee in Nazareth.⁷⁸ He was a pro-Zionist and was hated by the Arabs of that area. An eye-witness describes the assassination:

"Andrews, the District Commissioner of that area, took it upon himself to make that area Jewish. He used to speak fluent Arabic. They (the rebels) killed him on Sunday as he was going to the Church. Four or five men shot at him and then ran away. The British arrested many people. I was one of them. They took some of us to Jerusalem for interrogation and others were taken to Acre".⁷⁹

By the end of 1937, the revolt had spread south as far as Beersheba, and north to Upper Galilee. The propaganda campaign conducted by the rebels, the frequent visits of the rebel leaders to the different areas, the success of the rebel attacks on British and Jewish targets, the general disappointment felt by the Palestinian Arabs as a result of the Royal Commission's recommendations, and the tense political atmosphere following the publication of the report, all helped to spread the idea that only armed struggle would bring an end to the British Mandate and the Jewish national home project, and the achievement of national goals. The intensification of rebel operations in the Galilee area was additionally motivated by the suggestion in the partition scheme of the Royal commission that Galilee should be included in the Jewish state.

It soon became apparent to the British authorities that the revolt was growing and spreading to all parts of the country, and that the rebels' organisation and fighting skills had improved considerably, as had their operations. Names like Abu-Durra in the Jenin-Haifa area, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad in the Tulkarm-Nablus area, 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq in the Tulkarm-Ramalla area, Issa Battat in Hebron, 'Abd al-Qadir al-

78 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. p.289

79 Rajih 'Abboushi, personal interview, 31/3/85, Jenin.

Husseini in the Jerusalem area, Mohammad al-Salih (Abu-Khalid) in Silat al-Zhahir area, Khalil Mohammad Issa (Abu Ibrahim al-Kabir) and 'Abdullah al-Asbah in the Galilee area, and Hasan Salameh in the Ramleh-Jaffa area, became well-known names to the Arab population in Palestine, and were the men most wanted by the British authorities.

The political leadership of the Palestinians who were exiled and located mostly in Damascus formed al-Lajna al-Markaziyya lil-Jihad (The Central Committee for the Holy War), in Damascus. This committee, guided by the escaped Mufti based in Lebanon, and under the active administration of Izzat Darwazah in Damascus, was to provide co-ordination and co-operation between the largely independent rebel formations which were headed by military commanders, and assisted by regional commanders and unit leaders, on the one hand, and the political leadership in exile and the rebels in Palestine, on the other.⁸⁰

This relation, and the flow of money, arms and information provided by the Committee, caused a constant traffic of arms and supplies across the Palestine-Syria borders. This successful coordination led the British authorities to turn to Sir Charles Taggart, an official whose reputation was formed by his effective police measures in India, to assist the government in Palestine in their endeavours to stop the revolt, and to stop the arms and supplies traffic through the borders. Taggart devised a strategy of placing about sixty-five military police forts throughout the country. He also set up the 'Taggart Line', a barbed wire entanglement strung on stakes set in concrete which stretched along the Lebanese and Syrian borders from the Mediterranean as far as lake of Tiberias.⁸¹ However, the 'Taggart Line' proved ineffective, and before long it was cut down by the rebels and sold off on the market.⁸²

"One night the commanders gave us orders to go to the mountains where there is a wire from Ras al-Nagura to

80 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine, A Modern History*. p.211

81 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. p.280

82 *Ibid*, p280

Mount Hermon, on the borders between Palestine and Lebanon. We met in a village called Suhatra and went round other villages - forty or fifty of us would go to a village and gather the men. We went to the wire and started to cut it down. It was six meters high and ten meters deep. That night we cut down twenty-two kilometers of wire."⁸³

By the end of 1937 the revolt had been organised in such a way that its commanders in the mountains had set up rebel courts to solve the domestic grievances of the villagers who boycotted government courts in accordance with the call to civil disobedience. These courts also tried collaborators and a system of punishment was introduced. There were even appeal courts, an intelligence system, an administration and a network of messengers who helped maintain contact between the rebel commanders and the public, and between rebel commanders and the secret organisations operating in the towns, as well as with the central committee in Damascus. Each leader also had his own secretariat (see details in chapters five and six).

The last three months of 1937 witnessed a series of violent attacks against Jewish buses, telephone wires, the IPC pipeline, and against military posts and targets. They also witnessed some of the biggest battles since 1936 between rebel forces and the British troops. One such was the battle of Fassotah on 14th November 1937 in Galilee, in which the rebels were led by Khalil Mohammad Issa (Abu-Ibrahim al-Kabir), with the co-ordination of three other regional commanders, Sheikh Mahmoud Salim al-Makhzumi, 'Abdullah al-Sha'ir and 'Abdullah al-Asbah.⁸⁴ Another was the battle of 'Arab al-'Aramskeh on the 12th November 1937 near Shafa-'Amr in which the rebels were mostly Galilee bedouins.⁸⁵ The battle of

83 Mustafa al-Bakri, personal interview, 20/2/1985, al-Be'neh, Galilee.

84 Hussein Baytam, personal interview 21/2/85, Abu-Snan, Galilee. Ibrahim Hanna personal interview 23/1/85 al-Be'neh, Galilee, and Bulus Bolus, personal interview, 20/3/85 al-Be'neh, Galilee, all fought in this battle.

85 Ibid.

al-Llawayat, on 8th December 1937, witnessed one of the largest gatherings of the rebels auxiliary forces.⁸⁶

The battle of al-Yamoun near Jenin, in November 1937, was led by Sheikh 'Atiya a Qassamite, he was killed during the battle. The leadership was taken over by Yusif Said Abu-Durra, another Qassamite from the village of Silat al-Harithiya near Jenin. In this battle the British forces were forced to bring in reinforcements to be able to regain control of the battle-field.⁸⁷

The British forces had only two successes in 1937: the killing of Sheikh 'Atiya; and the arrest of Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di, another Qassamite who was operating in the Jenin-Haifa area, and was thought to be responsible for the assassination of collaborators. Mr. Hugh Foot the District Commissioner responsible for his arrest felt great relief that the commander of a large rebel battalion, who was most sought after by the authorities, had been arrested.

"There was the case of someone who was a known leader and a greatly respected leader I am sure. The purpose was to capture and eliminate the leaders of the revolt. He was one of the leaders whom we caught one day in one of the little villages of Jenin. I happened to be present when we actually arrested him. Very often we couldn't find the person we were searching for, but on this particular occasion we did and Sheikh Farhan was captured".⁸⁸

Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di was sentenced to death and was hanged on the 27th November 1937.⁸⁹

In the first few months of 1938, the rebels continued their guerrilla warfare, the revolt reaching its peak in the summer of that year with the rebels extending their control over most of the roads and many of the

86 Ibid and Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-'Arabiya*. p.103

87 Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. p.140 and Kamil Ghanim, a personal interview, 13/1/84, Kufr Quod, Jenin and Mohammad al Shuriedi, personal interview 21/1/85. Un al-Fahm. Both fought in that battle.

88 Sir Hugh Foot (now Lord Caradon) served as an Assistant District Commissioner in the Northern district. Personal Interview May 1983, London.

89 Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.340.

towns, and over all of the countryside, and they were active in all areas of the country:

"During 1938 the whole country was really in rebellion, The Arab rebel forces had an awful lot of control; they were very strong indeed. I don't know how many forces the Arabs may have had, but the British had at least 20,000 troops there and I think the Arabs must have had with various irregulars and village volunteers and things like that, twice the number up and down. They held the whole of the country, apart from the main towns. Palestine's government, together with the British forces, then held the main towns and their various camps in which they were stationed, but the outside was really rebel country controlled by the rebel armies."⁹⁰

All the railway stations between Jerusalem and Lydda and most of the stations between Lydda and the Egyptian borders were destroyed. Police stations were raided by the rebels who stole arms and ammunition from them. Most of the police stations were closed except for those in Gaza and Hebron, as they were held by the army.⁹¹ Perhaps one of the most daring attacks on a police station was that carried out against the Jenin police station on the 24th August 1938, when the Assistant District Commissioner of Jenin, Mr. S. Moffat, was killed in his guarded office inside the police station.⁹² An eye-witness to the killing, who was in the police station during the attack recalls the incident:

"I was asked to see Mr. Moffat. He used to meet seven or eight Mukhtars on certain days of the week. We sat on the benches in front of the commissioner's office, and the English guards were walking back and forth in front of us. A hunch-backed man came and sat on the bench, he had a white paper in his hand. He knocked at the commissioner's door. We began to shout at him that it was prohibited to enter. But he opened the door and began to shoot. He shot nine bullets. Six of them hit the commissioner who collapsed. The rebel walked out and at the top of the stairs began to shoot in all directions, and escaped. They took us all to prison after that."⁹³

90 Mr R. Martin, served in the Palestine Police 1936-1948. Personal interview 5/4/1983, Burley, Hampshire, England.

91 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.238.

92 *A survey of Palestine, 1945-6, Vol.1, p.45*

93 Kamil Ghanim, personal interview 13/1/1984. Kufr Qoud, Jenin.

The British authorities took extreme measures in an effort to crush the revolt and stop the villagers from supporting and hiding the rebels. In addition to attacks against the rebel units, the authorities took various extreme punitive measures against those supporting or suspected of supporting or hiding rebels, such as collective fines, long periods of curfew, demolishing houses, and searches, as well as mass arrests and harsh sentences. Between 1937-39 the number of Arabs hanged exceeded 100.⁹⁴ Many people in Palestine still recall vividly the times when the British conducted searches or imposed curfews on their villages:

"The English used to come to our village and ask the Mukhtar to take the men to the village square, and the women and children to the village mosque. We used to stay from morning to evening. When we went to our houses in the evening we found the oil, wheat, barley and flour all mixed together and thrown on the beds. We found our cattle, cows and sheep cut loose. One year this lasted for thirty days. They used to come and do this every day. They used to make the men walk on prickly pear leaves bare foot."⁹⁵

"There was a clash near our village Sha'ib [between the rebels and the British forces]. After it was finished, and we had buried the man from our village who was killed in the clash, a mine exploded under an army vehicle. They [the British] came, and surrounded our village, and then they demolished more than forty or fifty of the houses in the village"⁹⁶

The demolition of these houses became the major reason for a big battle in that area, on the 19th of July 1938, the Battle of al-Llawayat.

94 The names of many of those hanged are to be found in Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. pp.35,36,55,210. Some of the names are also in Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.349.

95 Wife of Mohammad Jaradat, personal interview, 4/2/85 Silat al-Harithiya, Jenin. This sort of action, the curfews and searches in the houses, the damage to people's belongings and forcing men to walk on prickly pear leaves, was repeated in almost all the interviews for this research.

96 Raji al-Khatib, personal interview, 22/3/85. Majd al-Kurum, Galilee; Mubadda Farhat, personal interview, 21/3/85 Majd al-Kurum, Galilee; Hussein Baytam. Personal interview, 21/2/85. Abu-Snan, Galilee and Fadil al-'Id personal interview, 23/3/85, Kabul, Galilee. All of these men fought in the battle of al-Llawayat, and said that the demolition of many houses of Sha'ib was the reason for the rebels to start the battle.

The curfews, mass arrests, collective fines, searches and house-demolitions became the standard measures adopted by General Haining, who had succeeded Wavell as General Officer Commanding in May 1938, and who took it upon himself to crush the revolt:

"The normal military operation now being carried out in Palestine is therefore a [check and search] of villages or areas or portions of a town.

A) A cordon round the area is first established either by troops aircraft all males of the village are collected for identification... and a house-to-house search of the village is carried out... proved offenders punishable under emergency regulations are then transferred as soon as possible to permanent concentration camps....

B) Collective punishments: there are only three types of collective punishment employed in Palestine:

i) Collective fines: usually collected in cash, but occasionally animals or food have been seized as security for cash which allegedly cannot be raised.

ii) Collective demolition: in some cases the efficacy of collective taxes has been exhausted, as there is no money and some other deterrent must be applied ... one or more houses are marked either of suspected bad characters, or of village notables who can and should control the village; if repetition of the act occurs, the marked houses are demolished.

iii) Curfews: in urban areas an immediate and punitive curfew is frequently imposed upon a town or a quarter in which a terrorist crime is committed"⁹⁷

Other measures taken by the government included permitting the Jews to act in concert with its armed forces against the Arab revolt. The Jews were more than eager to crush the revolt, which, it seemed to them, was beginning to endanger their proposed national home in Palestine. A total of 2,800 Jews were enrolled as supernumerary constables, and a certain number of rifle licenses were issued to Jews in addition to the supplies in sealed armouries which had been allowed in Jewish settlements for some years.⁹⁸ The supernumerary constables quite openly

97 A letter by R.M. Haining to the Colonial Office, 1st December 1938, CO 733/387/63819

98 The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Great Britain and Palestine, 1915-1939. London, 1940, p.77

became the legal center of the large illegal, military organisation, the 'Haganah'. They organised themselves on the lines of an army and conducted searches in the villages, committing atrocities against the Arab villagers, to terrorise them into not supporting the revolt. A letter sent by the Sheikh of Kufur Masr in the sub-district of Beisan describes a search conducted in his village by the Jewish armed forces:

"An ultimatum of fifteen minutes was granted for the villagers to produce seven rifles, failing which the lives of fifteen villagers would have to be sacrificed as an alternative.....When the time limit was up, the officer in charge ordered the male villagers to line up and counted them picking out every eighth person. The three victims, whose ill-fortune had caused them to be sacrificed, were manacled to each other, led about fifteen yards from the whole assembly and with their backs to the firing squad were shot and killed like dogs. They finished this gala entertainment by beating the crowd of villagers who were standing dumbfounded, looking at what they could only interpret as a horrible nightmare."⁹⁹

In addition to the searches of the 'official' Jewish army against the villages, there were also many attacks on Arabs carried out by Jewish extremists. For example, on the 6th and 25th July 1938, bomb explosions in the Arab fruit market in Haifa caused the death of 74 Arabs and injured a further 129. There were also bomb outrages in Jerusalem and Jaffa.¹⁰⁰ However, despite the measures taken by the government and the terrorist attacks of the Jewish supernumeraries and Zionist extremists, the revolt continued, and gained increasing support and volunteers from both villages and towns.

The strength of the revolt was at its peak during the summer of 1938. The rebels were able to occupy some towns and actually turn them into no-go areas for the British; some of these towns were only occupied for a few hours, however, which was more a display of strength and control by the rebels. For example, on the 22nd August the town of

⁹⁹ A letter by Irsheid al-Zu'bi to the District Commissioner of Galilee, CO 733/371/2

¹⁰⁰ Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, A Survey of Palestine. prepared in Dec. 1945 and Jan 1946, Vol.1, p.45

Hebron was occupied by the rebels for three hours, and the British forces entered the town after the rebels withdrew. This operation was led by 'Abd al-Halim al-Julani. Four of the rebel units protected the main roads to Hebron, another unit occupied the Post Office and the Bab al-Zawyeh area of the town, and a further unit occupied the bank and the police station after a clash with the police force which was guarding the bank. 'Abd al-Halim and his unit walked through the streets of Hebron unhindered. After three hours they withdrew with over 25 rifles, pistols and ammunition seized from the police station. ¹⁰¹ On the 11th September Beersheba in Southern Palestine was similarly occupied likewise for a short time by rebel forces. So was Khan Yunis on the 14th September 1938. ¹⁰² The old town of Jerusalem was occupied on the 13th September 1938. A general strike was declared in the morning, and the rebels ordered the people not to leave their homes. Four police stations were occupied and raided for their weapons, while another rebel force occupied the police station near the 'Wailing Wall' killing four British police and seizing their arms. The occupation of the old town lasted for five days. ¹⁰³

The Revolt, the Third Stage, 1939

The British, alarmed by increasing tension in Europe and the possibility of war, set out to finish the revolt by both military and diplomatic means. In a meeting held at the War Office in London on 7th October 1938, it was decided to send more reinforcements to Palestine.¹⁰⁴ The next day the Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote to the Officer administering the government of Palestine:

101 Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. pp.186-7.

102 Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. pp.447-9

103 Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. pp.194-6 and Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done*. pp.237-238

104 Minutes of the meeting held at the War Office 7th October 1938, CO. 733/372.

"Four more battalions, a battery of artillery and some armoured cars, with ancillary troops, will arrive during the course of the next two or three weeks. This will bring the strength of the military forces up to seventeen battalions of infantry, in addition to two horsed cavalry regiments, a battery of artillery and armoured cars."¹⁰⁵

Haining attempted to stamp out the rebels with the aid of two divisions, squadrons of airplanes, the British Police, the Trans-Jordanian frontier forces, and six thousand Jewish auxiliary forces.¹⁰⁶ He checked out and searched every district and village suspected of being a center of rebel activity.¹⁰⁷

While General Haining was conducting his military operations against the revolt, the report of the Partition Commission was published on the 9th November 1938. This Commission had been sent out to Palestine to study the practicability of the Partition Plan suggested by the Royal Commission the previous year.¹⁰⁸ The Partition Commission ruled out the Partition Plan as impracticable. Accordingly the government decided to abandon the proposed partition, and alternatively invited Jews and Arabs including representatives of some Arab states, to attend a conference in London, to discuss the situation in Palestine. The Palestinian Arabs welcomed the abandonment of the Partition Plan but felt dismayed that the proposed conference would not be discussing the matters of Jewish immigration and land sales. Their delegation was headed by Jamal al-Husseini as a representative of the Mufti, and also included two members of the Defence Party.

In the course of the discussions, it became clear that the conference (which opened on the 7th February 1939) could not offer a solution to

105 A letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer administering the government of Palestine, 8th October 1938, CO. 733/372/16

106 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine A Modern History*. p.217

107. Great Britain and Palestine 1915-39, London, 1945, p.103

108 The partition Commission, headed by Sir Woodhead, arrived in Palestine on 27/4/38 and left on 3/8/38. No Arab witnesses came forward to present their case. Cmd. 5854.

the problems in Palestine. Jamal al-Husseini presented the Arab demands for the recognition of the Arab right to independence, the abandonment of the Jewish national home, the immediate cessation of Jewish immigration and land sales, the cancellation of the Mandate and its replacement by a treaty of alliance with an independent Arab Palestine.¹⁰⁹ The Jewish delegation wanted the continuation of the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration, and refused to accept a minority status in Palestine.¹¹⁰

The failure of the Round Table Conference to reach any solution led the British government to publish its own solution on the 17th May 1939, namely the 'Palestine Statement of Policy', which became known as the 'White Paper'. It declared that the British Government desired to see an independent Palestine state in which both the Arab and the Jewish peoples would share authority in its government in such a way that the essential interests of each would be secured. This state would be ultimately established within a period of ten years, and Jewish immigration would continue at a rate which, if economic policy allowed, would increase the Jewish population to a level of one third of the total population of the country. On this basis it was calculated that 75,000 more immigrants could be admitted. With regard to land sales, the White Paper invested the High Commissioner with the power to prohibit and regulate the transfer of land if and when he was satisfied that the 'rights and position' of the Arab population be duly preserved. He would also review and modify any orders passed relating to the prohibition or restriction of the transfer of land.¹¹¹

The White Paper was rejected by the Higher Arab Committee on the grounds that it did not concede to the Arab demands, and failed to

109 A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine A Modern History*. p.220

110 *Ibid.* p.220

111 Statement of Policy (known as the 'MacDonald White Paper') 17/5/1939. Cmd 6019

guarantee that Palestine would remain Arab.¹¹² The Zionists likewise voiced their rejection condemning the proposal of the White Paper, and thus began a wave of violence against the British in Palestine,¹¹³ as well as against the Arabs.¹¹⁴

With all signs indicating the imminent outbreak of war in Europe,¹¹⁵ the British and the Zionists became even more determined to crush the Arab revolt in Palestine. In the spring and summer of 1939, the revolt itself was weakening, for many combined factors. First the intensive military counter-attacks against the rebels and their supporters had combined with diplomatic efforts to help diffuse the intense situation. Secondly the counter-attacks of the 'peace-bands' had their effect. These were formed in 1939 by the opposition and other anti-Husseini persons, with the support and collaboration of both the British authorities and the Zionist Movement (see details in chapter eight). Thirdly the killing or arrest of some of the most prominent rebel leaders was discouraging. For example 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, was killed in a clash, in March 1939.¹¹⁶ Abu-Durra was arrested in July 1939¹¹⁷, and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq surrendered to the French authorities at the Syrian borders in April 1939.¹¹⁸ This created a big leadership vacuum among the rebel ranks, adding to the weakening process of the revolt. Fourth there were internal problems, such as political assassinations, and after misbehaviour some rebels, and conflicts between the leaders. There were also organisational

112 Akram Zueiter, *Wathaiq al-Haraka*. Document No. 512, pp.648-653.

113 The headquarters of the Administration's Department of Immigration was set on fire. Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. p.320

114 A survey of Palestine 1945-46, Vol. 1, p.54

115 Hitler's armies had already invaded Czechoslovakia and the Italians invaded Albania.

116 Ibrahim Shehadeh, personal interview, 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin.

117 Mohammad Jaradat, personal interview, 4/2/85, Silat al-Harithiya, Jenin.

118 Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.588.

and structural weaknesses within the forces. Added to all the above, was the suppression by the French authorities of the rebel headquarters in Damascus, which led to a shortage of supplies, arms and ammunition to the rebels. ¹¹⁹

In the summer of 1939, soon after the declaration of the Second World War, most of the rebels who were not arrested went back to their villages. Many of them surrendered their arms, and their operations ceased. By winter 1939, the revolt had ended.

119 Ibid. p.601

CHAPTER FIVE

The Military Organisation of the Revolt

The Formation of the Fasa'il:¹

During the early stages of the revolt in early 1936, the various rebel groups in the different parts of the country did not have any organisational structure, and with the exception of some of the groups which were operating under the leadership of some of the local leaders who were beginning to emerge and to form and lead rebel groups, especially in Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarm, areas, most rebel groups were operating without any clear leadership. Each of latter the groups comprised a few men who would launch an attack on a British target, or a Jewish settlement, or sabotage railways and cut telephone lines.

"There was no leader, no fasa'il, only ten or fifteen of us, would decide to launch an attack; and if we needed help in the battle, armed men from other villages would come to our aid"²

¹ Singular Fasil, Platoon. A rebel Fasil comprised an average of twelve to fifteen men.

² Arafat al-Khatib, personal interview, 13/3/85. al-Shati' refugee camp, Gaza. He was the Mukhtar of al-Qubaiba village near Ramleh during the revolt.

In the Spring and Summer of 1936, leaders such as 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq (both from Tulkarm area), Mohammad al-Salih (from Silat al-Zahir between Jenin and Nablus), and Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi (in Jenin area), began to systematically recruit men for the revolt and to form rebel groups. However, it is important to mention here, that some of the Qassamites such as Farhan al-Sa'di had been operating since the death of al-Qassam in November 1935.

These leaders began to recruit men and to form rebel groups. They visited the villages in their areas, urging the people to arm themselves, as well as seeking volunteers to join the revolt. The Mukhtars (village heads) or the heads of families were asked to provide the revolt with men and arms.

"Some men of the rebels came to our village. They wanted men, and asked the people to arm themselves. The Muslims in our village said that they did not have money, but they would provide the men. The Christians who were richer than the Muslims, said that they would provide the money to arm the men"³

Usually the leaders' requests were made for a specified number of men, and if the villages were unable to provide men, for a certain number of rifles instead.⁴

"Abd al Rahim gave me some letters and told me to distribute them in certain villages near Jenin, asking the villagers to meet him in Silat al-Harithiya village. He told them that he wanted an armed man from each village. He gathered about forty or fifty men from there..."⁵

However, these leaders and others in other areas did not encounter any difficulty recruiting men to join the revolt. Quite the opposite; the people of Palestine were ripe for armed revolt (see Chapter Four),

³ Ibrahim Hanna, Personal interview 23/1/85. al-Be'neh Galilee. He became a Commander of the village Fasil during the revolt.

⁴ Ali Zaiyadneh, Personal interview, 16/4/1985, Tamra, Galilee.

⁵ Shakir Milhim, Personal Interview, 6/4/1985 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm. He was a personal assistant of Abd al Rahim Haj Mohammad.

especially during the general strike. Many men bought rifles and sought to join the various leaders in their areas.

"My father refused to give me money to buy a rifle, because my brother had already joined the revolt. He wanted me to stay and help him work the land. So, I went to the Daboyia [Police Headquarters] and stole a horse from them. I gave the horse to Rabah al-'Awad [a Fasil leader in Upper Galilee] so that in return he may give me a rifle, I followed him for a while but I did not get the rifle. I stole the horse back from him, and gave it to the leader Abu-Khadir, who gave me a rifle and I joined his Fasil"⁶

"In the beginning I had a rifle, and used to follow the rebels with some other armed men. When we learned that the rebels were in a certain area, we would join them. Then later a Fasil was formed, led by Ahmad Bishr from Majd al-Kurum. We worked with him all the time."⁷

Some of the rebel volunteers joined their leaders and travelled with them, and some stayed in their villages waiting for orders either to join the leader if they were needed, or to launch an attack in a certain time and place were asked.

"There were twelve of us in al-Be'neh. We used to meet and go wherever the leaders gave orders to launch an attack"⁸

However, the attacks which were launched by these rebels were not all carried out on the orders of the rebel leaders. In many cases, groups of rebels attacked army vehicles, or Jewish settlements or car convoys on main roads at their own initiative.⁹

In the early stages of recruitment, the villages which did not form National Committees, were asked by the rebel leaders to form Committees, which would be responsible for recruiting volunteers, and collecting money to provide them with arms.¹⁰

⁶ Hussein Baytam, Personal Interview, 21/2/1985. Abu-Snan, Galilee. He was originally from al-Kuwaikatvillage, and lived in Abu-Snan since 1948.

⁷ Mustafa al-Bakri, Personal Interview, 20/12/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibrahim Shehadeh, Personal Interview, 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin.

¹⁰ Raji al-Khatib, Personal Interview, 22/3/1985, Majd al-Kurum, Galilee. He is originally from Sha'ab village, and lived in Majd al-Kurum since 1948.

Until the arrival of al-Qawuqji in Palestine, the Palestinian rebel leaders were operating independently of each other. Each operated in his area with forty or fifty men. They were also able to mobilise a large number of volunteers from the villages. At this stage there were two attempts at coordination between the various local leaders. The first was in July 1936, when some local leaders in the Jenin-Nablus area met near Tubas village to discuss unity and coordination between themselves. However, this attempt did not succeed. The second attempt took place in August 1936, also near Tubas. A meeting between the local leaders, Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, Khamis 'Aqrabawi, Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di, 'Abdullah al-Bairuti, and Dirar al-Nashashibi. At this meeting they agreed to form three local commands, one in the mountains of Nablus, one in the Tulkarm area, and the third in the Haifa area. They also decided at this meeting to form a rebel court to bring collaborators to trial. Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi was elected by these local leaders as the General Commander in the Jenin-Tulkarm area.¹¹

However, the first successful attempt to organise the rebel forces in a hierarchical structure under one leadership came from al-Qawuqji. He divided the rebel forces into units of fasa'il, and appointed a Commander for each unit.

"I joined Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi and Fawzi al-Qawuqji, they were in Deir al Ghussun village. We went from one village to another, building fasa'il. Each Fasil was ten or fifteen men. They appointed a Ra'is Fasil (unit head) for each Fasil."¹²

Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, who had joined al-Qawuqji during his short stay in Palestine, described the method applied by al-Qawuqji to organise and train the rebels in the Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm areas:

"After dividing the men into Units, the Commanders of these Units were asked to remain in their villages for

¹¹ Yusuf Rajab al-Radi'i, *Thawrat 1936 Fi Filastin*, p.47

¹² Mohammad Mustafa Jaradat, personal interview 4/2/1985 Silat al-Harithiya, Jenin. He later joined Abu-Durra from the same village.

further orders. Several Units from different villages would join him in turn in the mountains. These stays lasted for about three weeks, during which time these units participated in battles and clashes. In this way the "army" as he used to call the Arab volunteers who crossed the borders with him to Palestine, would give them basic military training and discipline. At the end of the three week period, they were sent back to their villages, to be replaced with other Units".¹³

al-Qawuqji used to call these training courses al-Tallat" - (the visits).¹⁴ In this manner, he could provide basic military training for a large number in a short time. Thus he was also able to maintain a constant force of 300 to 400 men with him all the time for the clashes with the British forces. He also introduced other effective methods to the Palestinian rebels, which improved the quality of their performance in the battles and clashes. One was the utilisation of military maps which allowed the leaders to study their plans before launching an attack.¹⁵ al-Qawuqji also organised the rebel army administratively, allocating responsibility for the provision of arms, ammunition and supplies.¹⁶ In addition he set up a special Intelligence Unit whose purpose was to distribute propaganda leaflets to the people ¹⁷, and to gather information about the movements of the British forces.

However, following the departure of al-Qawuqji and some of the Arab volunteers from Palestine, local rebel leaders reverted to their previous decentralised and unorganised methods of operating within their own areas.

In early 1937, however, the rebel leaders found it necessary to divide their forces into more organised Units. Growing numbers of rebels, as well as the rapid spread of the revolt into other areas of Palestine - namely Galilee in the North and Gaza in the South - highlighted the need

¹³ Bahjat Abu Gharbiya, Personal interview 5/5/1985 Amman. Jordan.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Yusuf Rajab al-Radi'i, Thawrat 1936 Fi Filastin. pp.48-9

¹⁶ Khairiya Qasmiya (ed.) Filastin Fi Mudhakkarat al-Qawuqji. p.22

¹⁷ Ibid. p.23

for tighter organisation. Therefore they followed al-Qawuqji's example of dividing the rebel forces into units (Fasail), with unit Commanders being responsible to the leader himself.

"There used to be more than 30 rebel leaders in all of Palestine, and the people worked with them as volunteers. These volunteers did as they pleased for the most part. But later, the leaders divided the rebels into units and appointed a Commander for each unit. They also divided the areas among themselves. Each of these leaders was responsible for a Certain area."¹⁸

There was no fixed number of rebels in each Fasil; it varied from one village to another with an average troop strength of between ten and fifteen men. ¹⁹ In some villages, however, the number of rebels in a unit could amount to 30 or 40.²⁰ In some areas more than one unit could be found, with their heads under the command of a Regional or sub-regional Commander, who himself had a unit of his own. This was the case in some of the villages in the Tulkarm area:

"In the beginning we were with 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad himself. But when the number of rebels grew bigger, the fasa'il were formed. In Zeita and 'Attil, the head of the Fasil was 'Abdullah al-Asa'd. In Deir al-Ghussun there were four fasils lead by four commanders. Each had a separate budget, but all were responsible to Ahmad Mas'ad, who himself commanded a Fasil."²¹

It was not standard practice for each village to have a fasil. In some cases, two villages formed one fasil as in the case of Zeita and 'Attil in the Tulkarm area, depending on the size of the village and the number of rebels available. In the bigger villages, more than one fasil could be found as in the case in Deir al-Ghussun village in the Tulkarm area. However, it was not always the size of the village or the number of rebels which determined the formation of more than one fasil.

¹⁸ Rajih al-'Abboushi, personal interview, 31/3/1985 Jenin.

¹⁹ Hussein Baytam, personal interview, 21/2/1985 Abu-Snan, Galilee and Ibrahim Shehadeh, personal interview 8/4/1985 Aqqaba, Jenin

²⁰ Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview, 21/1/85 Um al-Fahm

²¹ Bashir Ahmad Ibrahim, personal interview 15/7/84, Zeita, Tulkarm. He became a rebel judge in his area during the revolt.

Competition between two or more rival families could lead each to support a different *fasil* in the same village - or, in some cases, to form a *fasil* with a family member as its Commander. Forming *fasa'il* was a matter of prestige for Palestinian families during the revolt. The village of Qabatiya in Jenin area, is an example of such practice. Here, more than one *fasil* was formed because each of the two leading families in the village supported a different faction of the national movement. While Nazal family supported the opposition faction, because of its good relations with the 'Abd al-Hadi family, the other big family, Abu-J'ib, supported the Mufti.²² Thus in Qabatiya, two *fasils* were to be found during the revolt.

In the towns, it was common practice to have more than one *fasil*, first because of the size of the towns which necessitated more than one *fasil*. Also, each rebel leader sought to have his own *fasil* in the towns, because of the competition between the leaders to prove their hegemony over the towns. In Jaffa at the end of 1937, there was a *fasil* for 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, another for 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, and a third for Hasan Salameh.²³ This was in addition to the smaller *fasa'il* which belonged to the local Commanders of villages around Jaffa, who were also operating in the town.

From the interviews with certain rebels who joined the revolt, both as full-time fighters or auxiliary fighters, one gets the impression that a rudimentary hierarchical order existed within the ranks of the rebels. However, there was an overlap in the tasks and responsibilities of the different hierarchal ranks, making it difficult to draw clear dividing lines between them - for example, between Regional Commanders and Sub-Regional Commanders, or between the latter and the *fasa'il* leaders. However, an informal hierarchical order seems to have existed.

²² Rajih 'Abbushi, personal interview, 31/3/1985 Jenin.

²³ Faisal Arif Abd al-Raziq, the son of Arif 'Abd al-Raziq. personal interviews. 21/2/85, 20/4/85. al-Taybah The Triangle.

The following hierarchical sketch can be outlined based on interviews with former rebels.²⁴ The Commanders of the rebel forces consisted of four ranks: General Commanders, Regional Commanders, Sub-regional Commanders and fasa'il Leaders. (see Appendix A, for the names and ranks). The General Commander was responsible for the whole area in which he operated, he maintained direct contacts with the Central Committee in Damascus, he signed orders, and the communiques of his area come out in his name. The most prominent General Commanders during the revolt, were 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, 'Arif 'Abd al Raziq, Abu-Durra, Mohammad al-Salih, Sheikh 'Atiyah Mohammad 'Awad, all operating in the Central area; 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, Hasan Salameh, operating in the Southern area; and Khahil Mohammad Issa, operating in Galilee.

The rank directly under the General Commander, was the Regional Commander, who was not necessarily responsible for a region, or even for a few fasa'il, although many of them were. The Regional Commander acted mostly as a General Commander deputy in the organisation of military operations, or to set up rebel courts or, issue orders. Among the most prominent Regional Commanders were Mohammad al-Saffuri and Tawfiq al-Ibrahim (Abu-Ibrahim al-Saghir), in the Galilee area (the latter acted as the deputy of Khail Mohammad Issa). In the Central area, 'Ali al-Faris, and Yusif al-Hamdan, were the best known regional

²⁴ Mohammad Yusif al-Shureidi, personal interview, 21/1/1985 Um al-Fahm
Ahmad Nazal, personal interview, 1/4/1984. Qabatiya, Jenin
Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm
Ibrahim Hanna, personal interview, 23/1/1985. al-Be'neh, Galilee
Raji al-Khatib, personal interview, 22/3/1985, Majd al-Kurum, Galilee
Salih 'Ayyoush, personal interview, 19/2/1985, Sakhnin, Galilee
Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/1985, Amman, Jordan

commanders serving under Abu-Durra in Jenin area. Each of these also had several fasa'il operating under his command. In the Tulkarm area, Hamad Zawata and Faris al-'Azzoni, who operated with 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, had fasa'il of their own to command. And Fawzi Jarrar from Jenin area was a regional commander with 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad.

Sub-regional Commanders, were responsible for several fasa'il in geographical smaller area than regional commanders such as a group of three or four villages. Among the best known sub-regional commanders were Sulaiman Abu-'Ali and 'Abdullah al-Asbah from Galilee; Mahmoud Dirawi, and Mohammad al-Jalqamusi in the Jenin area; and Ibrahim Abu-Daya and 'Abd al-Fattah al Mazra'awi in the Southern area.

The fasil commander was responsible for keeping his men in good shape and constant readiness for battle, and his duties included supplying the fasil with arms, ammunition and food. (see details in Chapter Six). He also had to report every battle, attack or sabotage operation in which his fasil participated to the Regional Commander, or to the General Commander in his area. He was also responsible for establishing a court system to solve the problems and disputes of the people in the area under his Command (see Chapter Six).

"I was a fasil commander, and I was also responsible for other fasa'il. I was the one who managed everything for them. I went to the villages, paid salaries for those fighters who were in need, and attended to the injured".²⁵

Many of the fasa'il had clerks to register their movements, and their food, ammunition and clothing needs, and to keep a record of the fasil expenditure.²⁶

Most fasil commanders used pseudonyms names, particularly those who were not full-time fighters. Since they were not known to the British

²⁵ Ahmad Nazal, personal interview, 1/4/1985. Qabatiya, Jenin.

²⁶ Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview, 21/1/1985. Um al-Fahm.

authorities and therefore not wanted, they did not wish to expose themselves. Most of the communiques and reports of the fasa'il operations were signed by their Commanders in false names, or pseudonyms, such as Abu-Mohammad,²⁷ or, Abu 'Ali,²⁸ or other pseudonyms, such as al-Mutawakil 'Ala Allah wa Rasulihi.²⁹ Likewise, many of the fasa'il were given names, either those of old Islamic heroes, such as 'The Fasil of Khalid Ibn al-Walid' or of recent leaders such as 'The Fasil of al-Qassam', or 'The Fassil of al-Mufti al Akbar'.³⁰

Before discussing the methods and tactics employed by the rebels during the revolt, it is important to mention the geographical distribution of the rebel forces. Palestine can be divided into three major areas of rebel forces concentration. The Galilee area in the north which included Safad, Acre, Tiberias, and Nazareth; this area was under the general command of Khalil Mohammad Issa (Abu Ibrahim al-Kabir), assisted by a number of regional commanders, sub-regional commanders and fasa'il leaders.³¹

The Central area, or Nablus district, which was divided into four areas, each of which was led by a general command, (a) the Jenin - western area, which included the area from Jenin to Haifa; this area was under the leadership of Sheikh 'Atiya 'Awad, and after his death Yusif Abu-Darra took the command of the area.

(b) the Jenin - eastern area, which included the area east to Jenin and along the Jenin-Nablus road, to the area South of Nablus, this area was led by Mohammad al-Salih (Abu Khalid), with Sheikh 'Abd al-Fattah al-

²⁷ Akram Zueiter, *Watha'iq al-Haraka*. Report No 16, document No. 306, p497

²⁸ Ibid. document No.348, pp.530-531

²⁹ Ibid. document No. 391, pp. 558-560

³⁰ Ibid. document No. 315, p.502, and document No. 331. pp.515-7 and document No. 353, p.536.

³¹ see Appendix D. A list of the names of general commanders regional and sub-regional, commanders, and the fasail leaders.

Hasan in command after his death, and after the death of the latter 'Abd al-Rahman al-Salih (Abu-'Omar) took the command.

(c) Tulkarm - eastern area, which included the area from Tulkarm to Nablus and extended to the Jordan valley; this area was under the command of 'Abd al Rahim Haj Mohammad (Abu Kamal), and after his death Ahmad Mohammad al Hasan (Abu Baker).

(d) Tulkarm - western area, which included the area from Tulkarm to the sea westwards, and to Ramallah southwards; this area was under the command of 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq (Abu-Faisal).

The Southern region, was divided into three areas;

(a) the area from Lydda and Ramleh to Jaffa, which was under the command of Sheikh Hasan Salameh (Abu 'Ali). (b) The Jerusalem area, which also included the area of Hebron, under the leadership of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, who appointed 'Abd al-Halim al-Julani as a commander of Hebron area after the death of Issa Battat who was commanding it. Also in Jerusalem there were some secret organisations operating independently. (c) Gaza and Beersheba area. In this area there were no general commanders or regional commanders, but some fasil commanders who operated in the area. In Beersheba, the heads of the Bedouin tribes played the role of fasa'il leaders.

The Faza'h

If the rebel fasa'il were the backbone of the revolt, the Faz'ah was its flesh and muscles. Faza'h literally means 'coming to the aid of a relative or a friend in rivalry or a clash'. The biggest number of the rebel forces were of al-Fazzia'h (singular Fazzi' - helper). The Faza'h or auxiliary forces consisted of all the fighters who remained in their villages, maintaining their ordinary life, and joining the fasa'il whenever they were needed in a battle or a clash. These auxiliary forces were of two

kinds. One consisted of those fighters who belonged to certain fasa'il, and had Commanders who issued orders for them to join a battle or a clash, or to launch an attack on certain targets.

"I was a fasil commander, leading some 40 men. Not all of them were in the mountains. Only ten or twelve were wanted by the authorities and remained hiding in the mountains. The rest would participate with us - fight with us during the night, and during the day, they went back to their homes and villages."³²

The other kind, which represented the vast majority of the Faza'h forces, were not organised within the fasa'il formations, but joined battles and clashes when needed. Some of these also carried out attacks of their own accord, sometimes when they were not needed to join a battle or a clash.

"We used to go and ambush a British patrol near the school or on the main road at night. We shot at them, then we withdrew; and in the morning we were all back in our fields, tending our crops"³³

The Faza'h forces were mobilised for a battle or a clash in three ways, either by the Regional Commander informing the fasa'il leaders in his area of the need for auxiliary forces to be made available at the intended place of battle or attack against the British forces. These fasa'il leaders would in turn inform the villages of this need. Another way of mobilising the Faza'h if needed during a battle, was to send a messenger from the battlefield to the villages, asking for their help. This messenger was called Tarish or Sawwat 'a herald'.

The third way through which Faza'a would also gather when planes were spotted in a particular area, alerting people to the fact that a battle was taking place, and they would set off for the battlefield to aid the rebels on horseback or on foot. Even if they had no arms, they still went, carrying sticks, hoes, or stones.³⁴

³² Hussein Badawi, personal interview, 8/4/1985. Aqqaba, Jenin.

³³ Hasan al-Haj Yusif. personal interview. 8/4/1985 Aqqaba, Jenin.

³⁴ Ali Mustafa al-Zabri, personal interview 5/3/1985, Arrabeh, Jenin.

"This was a very usual happening. When the people saw planes they knew a battle was taking place. They ran on foot in the mountains, sometimes tens of kilometers, from their villages, to help. In the Beit Imrin and Bala'h battles, many people went from my area (Salfit) on foot to help. Many times, when they got there, they found the battle was over".³⁵

The Faza'h System was the most important factor in the revolt, on which all the rebel leaders depended. Its importance stems from the fact that it involved a large number of people in the revolt, and it enabled a few full-time rebels of the fasa'il to mobilise hundreds of men to join their battles and clashes, or to help them escape a siege. After the clash, the rebels would continue to move to other areas, while the Faza'h went back to their villages and "dissolved", until the next battle. This gave the rebels a constant flow of fighters at the lowest possible cost, since they did not have to supply the Faza'h with food, arms or ammunition. It also made it more difficult for the British authorities to arrest rebels, for in this way every able man in every village was potentially a rebel. The Faza'h also gave the rebels the advantage of easy movement between the areas, as they could travel in small numbers, evading arrest and escaping cordons.

The full-time rebels and the Faza'h were not confined to mountains and villages. They also operated in the towns, albeit to a lesser extent and on a more secretive basis. Their tasks were to gather information about the British forces and to carry out acts of sabotage. There were also secret organisations, in the towns, which worked independently of the other fasa'il,³⁶ and some of them carried out assassinations against both British personnel and Arab collaborators.

³⁵ Rajih al Salfiti, personal interview, 28/6/1984, Salfit, Nablus.

³⁶ Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/1985 Amman, Jordan

The Conference of Deir Ghassaneh

The Central Committee for the Jihad which started to operate in the autumn of 1937 in Damascus and Lebanon, was composed of the Mufti, Sheikh Hasan Abu al-Saud, Munif al-Husseini and Ishaq Darwish who were in Lebanon, and Izzat Darwaza and Mu'in al-Madi in Damascus,³⁷ supported by some Syrian nationalists such as al-'Azmeah brothers Nabih and 'Adel. This Committee supported the rebel leaders in Palestine and supplied them with arms, ammunition, money and other supplies, as well as acting as an advisory body.³⁸ Each of the rebel leaders in Palestine maintained separate contact with the Central Committee.³⁹

As mentioned above, there were some unsuccessful attempts by certain rebel Commanders to try and unite under one leadership and to coordinate between the various fasa'il operating in different areas. However, the need to coordinate between the rebel groups increased with the growing numbers of rebels, the need to keep constant contact with the Central Committee in Damascus, and the need to solve many administrative and logistic problems, which the leaders were unable to solve by operating independently in his region and maintaining separate contacts with the Central Committee.

The rebel leaders, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, 'Arif 'Abd al Raziq, Yusif Said Abu-Durra, Mohammad al-Salih, and Hasan Salameh, met on the 19th of September 1938 in the village of Deir Ghassaneh near Ramallah, and agreed to form Diwan al-Thawrah al-Arabiyyah Fi Filastin (Bureau of the Arab Revolt in Palestine). 'Abd al-Rahim was appointed first General Commander, and each of the Bureau members would be head of the Bureau in rotation.⁴⁰ Mamdouh al-Sukhn was appointed the

³⁷ Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiyah al Filastiniya*. pp.208-9.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.209.

³⁹ *Ibid*. pp.209-210.

⁴⁰ Akram Zueiter, *Watha'iq al-Haraka*. pp.514-517

Bureau's Secretary. Thus from the 30th of October 1938, the Communiques of the rebel commanders were signed by the Bureau of the Arab revolt in Palestine. When the meeting had finished and the rebel leaders were on their way to their areas, a clash took place in the Deir Ghassaneh area between the British forces and Mohammad al-Salih and his men in which he was killed.⁴¹ Mohammad's cousin 'Abd al-Fattah al-Hasan took his place in the leadership of Nablus area, as well as in the Bureau.⁴²

Two leaders chose not to be in the Bureau, preferring to stay independent and maintain direct contact with the Central Committee in Damascus: 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, the Commander of Jerusalem area, and Khalil Mohammad Issa in the Galilee. Although the Communiques were signed by the Bureau, the member leaders continued to act independently in their regions, and also continued to maintain separate contact with the Central Committee. In spite of their independent behaviour, according to the interviews, these leaders did sometimes coordinate their activities in order to conduct operations or to solve problems between their fasa'il. For example when 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq worked together to lay siege to 'Arrabeh village to capture Fakhri 'Abd al Hadi, who was collaborating with the British. (See Chapter Eight).⁴³

"One day we went to Jisr al-Harithiya east of Haifa, near Jewish settlements to attack, so we sent messages to al-Damoun Fasil, and al-Berweh Fasil, and other fasa'il, that we would attack at such a place at such a time. They would then come and we did battle together. We used to cooperate and exchange fighters for example to cut telephone wires, or to blow up the railways"⁴⁴

⁴¹ Hasan al-Haj Yusuf, personal interview, 3/4/1984 Maythalun, Jenin, and Abd al-Aziz Shamalia, personal interview, 30/5/1984, Silat al-Dhahir, Jenin.

⁴² Hasan al-Haj Yusuf, 'Abd al-'Aziz Shamalia and Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Filastiniya*. p.453

⁴³ Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm

⁴⁴ Ali Zaydnah, personal interview, 16/4/1985. Tamra, Galilee

Manpower and Logistics

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of rebels who fought in the revolt during its three years, primarily because none of the rebel leaders, whether general commanders, or regional commanders or even fasa'il leaders, kept a record of the number of men under their command. More importantly, however, the largest proportion of rebels were Faza'h, who did not fight on a full-time basis. Nonetheless, according to Arab sources, the number of rebels was estimated to have been between 9,000 and 10,000. Of these 3,000 were thought to have operated full-time in the rural areas; 1,000 full-time in the towns; and 6,000, Faza'a auxiliaries in the villages and among the bedouins.⁴⁵ Lt. General Haining who was Commander of the British forces in Palestine in 1938, estimated the number to have been between 1,000 to 1,500 full-time rebels, aided by a large number (not stated) of volunteers from neighbouring areas.⁴⁶ The High Commissioner in Palestine estimated the number to have been 2,000 full-time fighters.⁴⁷ Other sources put the number at 5,000 divided between full-time fighters and auxiliaries in 1936. By 1938, however, the number had risen to 15,000.⁴⁸ These last estimates could be the closest to the truth, especially since during 1938 almost all of the countryside and most of the towns were actively involved in the revolt.

The rebels did not depend on sheer numbers alone in their guerrilla warfare against the British forces. In fact two things they have employed most effectively were their knowledge of the geography of the areas they were operating within, and more importantly their use of the clan-family networks of relations. As the vast majority of the rebels were peasants

⁴⁵ Subhi Yassin, Harb al-Issabat Fi Filastin. Cairo, 1967, pp.75-76

⁴⁶ Appreciation of the rebels, by Lt. Gen. Haining, WO 32/4562

⁴⁷ A letter from the High Commissioner in Palestine to the Colonial Secretary, 28/9/1938, Co 733/372/75156/102

⁴⁸ J. Marlowe, Rebellion in Palestine. London, 1946, p.147

from the rural areas, they knew the areas within which they were operating thoroughly. For example, they knew the routes which linked one village to another through the mountains, they knew the caves, the bushes and the rocks of the mountains which gave them shelter and places to hide, as well as safe places from which to launch attacks. This knowledge, which the British lacked, helped the rebels to move freely between the villages, and to avoid the main roads.⁴⁹ It also provided them with the opportunity to make quick, surprise attacks and withdraw safely through the mountains.

"We knew all the mountain tracks and paths, by day and night. The British did not know these routes. We used to walk through the mountains between villages, and when we got near a main road, we sent one or two of our comrades to check it for us. We crossed it and then continued through the mountains. We did not have telephones or a wireless. All we had was our instinctive alertness. We were safe on these mountain tracks. When the British came during the day to try and find us, they used planes. But we used to hide in the mountains, between big trees and in the big valleys. These places were the headquarters of the rebel forces."⁵⁰

Another element which provided the rebels with places for quick hiding, especially in the towns, was the architecture of the old houses. Many of the towns and villages were built on top of ancient towns of earlier periods. Thus beneath many houses in Palestine it was easy to find a network of corridors and secret rooms.⁵¹

"Once we saw planes above our heads, and then the British made a cordon around the village. Collaborators had informed them that Yusif al Hamdan [the regional

49 Bahjat Abu Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/1985 Amman, Jordan

50 Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview, 21/1/1985, Um al-Fahm.

51 Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi had such a house. When he defected from the revolt and started his anti-revolt peace bands in Jenin area, he used the corridors and secret rooms underneath his house in 'Arrabeh village as a prison for the rebels caught by his peace bands. These prisoners were later handed to the British, Fakhri himself used these same dungeons to hide from the rebels sent by 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad and Arif Abd al-Raziq to apprehend him following his defection. Shakir Milhim, personal interview 6/4/1985, Dhinnabeh Tulkarm.

commander of Um al-Fahm area, one of Abu-Durra's regional commanders] was in the village. So they came to arrest him. There was a cave near our house, and we hid Yusuf and his men in it and covered its entrance with stones and dirt. They remained there until the cordon was over, and the British withdrew from the village."⁵²

The network of narrow, complicated mazes of alleys in the old parts of the towns also provided good shelter for the rebels. For example, it was almost impossible for the British forces to enter the old part of Nablus or Jerusalem to make arrests, because the rebels disappeared. If the British forces did manage to succeed in entering, they more often than not, left with a number of casualties amongst their forces.

The other decisive factor employed by the rebels in their guerrilla warfare against the British forces, was the clan-family relations and the clan's network of alliances, which was employed to its fullest extent. The rebel leaders chose their men, especially guards and assistants, mostly from within the immediate or extended clan. This gave the leaders protection from within their *fasil* as well as during the battles, from men whose loyalty and devotion were largely based on kinship.

Usually the leaders also tried to bring the battles within the territories of their clans or clan alliances, thus providing them with unlimited numbers of *Faza'h* as well as supplies and food. This gave them better maneuvering ability, since they were fighting in their own territories, and brought the clan or the clan's allies to the battle where they would not only be helping the leader and his *fasil*, but also defending their own territories. The ability of a leader to use the mechanism of the clan network of relations and alliances, also determined his successes in the battlefield. It also meant that the revolt was not only a conflict between the rebel *fasa'il* and the British authorities, but was between the community as a whole united front and the British as well. This involvement of the whole of an area at times of

⁵² 'A'isha Mahajneh, personal interview, 18/1/85. Um al-Fahm
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battle or a clash meant, in fact, that the leader in that area was able to drive the whole of a community into becoming outlaws.

Elias Sanbar gives two examples from the accounts of ex-rebels of the employment of clan relations and network of alliances. The first concerns the movement of a horse which was lent to a rebel wanted by the authorities to escape from a certain village, and who was told to leave the horse in a particular place in another area. Later the horse was returned to its owner after passing from one person to another through the village networks. The other example concerns the movement of the arms used in the assassination of Andrews the District Commissioner of Nazareth. After the assassination, the arms were left near a certain rock at the outskirts of Nazareth. The rebels took the bus to Haifa as ordinary passengers, and meanwhile the arms were removed by another group in the area to be used in another operation.⁵³ Sanbar describes these networks of relations.

"It was a giant Ant Colony of men and equipment, in which the relations were invested, and no time was lost or dead, in using the arms. When a group of men relaxed, the arms were used by another group in another area."⁵⁴

The rebels depended on the villages for food and supplies. When any village heard of the presence of a rebel *fasil* nearby, even if it was not its own *fasil*, all the inhabitants would collect food and water. Sometimes coffee and tea - and take it to the *fasil*. They would be responsible for feeding the *fasil* for the duration of its stay near that village⁵⁵

"There was not a rebel who would enter a village hungry and stay that way; nor one who did not find shelter or a hiding place. Every village I went to during the revolt

⁵³ Elias Sanbar, Filastin 1948, Kazim Jihad, Beirut, 1987, p.54

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.54

⁵⁵ Personal interviews with Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, 5/5/1985 Amman; Hussein Badawi 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin; Salih Baransi May 1985 London; Hussein Baytam, 21/2/1985, Abu-Snan, Galilee and Bulus Hanna Bulus, 20/3/1985 al-Be'neh Galilee.

would give, not only myself, but all those with me, food and shelter."⁵⁶

The villagers also suffered punishment from the British authorities for helping the rebels. The British knew that the only way to crush the revolt a part from using military force, was to find a way to stop the villagers giving aid to the rebels. So they imposed cordons, searches and curfews, demolished houses, killed or arrested villagers and imposed collective fines. In spite of these harsh measures, the people in the villages and towns still helped the rebels.

"Once the British put a cordon around Taybah. They wanted the villagers to tell them the whereabouts of 'Arif 'Abd al Raziq, but nobody talked. they then imposed a large sum of money on the village as a collective fine. The villagers refused to pay, and all of them decided to leave the village. When the British came back to collect the fine, all the inhabitants had moved to the mountains, leaving only the Mukhtar in the village, with the keys to all our houses. When the British found that no one was in the village, they left. We stayed in the mountains for three days, and when we returned the British had gone."⁵⁷

Guerrilla Warfare

Guerrilla Warfare, as defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica is :

"a type of warfare characterised by irregular forces, fighting small-scale, limited actions; generally in conjunction with an larger, political-military strategy, against orthodox forces. Guerrillas are usually nondescript in dress, unconventional in weapons and equipment, lack formal supply lines, and employ highly unorthodox tactics. In addition to extremely mobile aggressive operations, these tactics embrace all aspects of psychological warfare, including the use of sabotage and terrorism."⁵⁸

The Palestinian rebel forces conducted guerrilla warfare against the British regular forces during the revolt of 1936-39. Being irregular forces, the rebels used all sources available to them in this war, including employing the relations and networks families and clans.

⁵⁶ Rajih al-Salfiti, personal interview, 28/6/1984. Salfit, Nablus.

⁵⁷ Salih Baransi, personal interview, May 1985, London.

⁵⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, Chicago, 1985, vol. 5, p.544.

The rebels early military operations in 1936 were unorganised and not well planned, until al-Qawuqji arrived in Palestine and made many improvements in their tactics and skills. During 1936, the rebels concentrated their efforts on ambushing Jewish and army convoys and attacking Jewish settlements, including cutting-down trees or burning fields, killing collaborators and shooting police and army officers.

The number of attacks in that year totalled 4,076, of which 1,996 were against Jews; 895 against Jewish properties, 795 against the British army and police, and 380 on transportation. During these attacks the total casualties were 224 dead and 1,126 injured, of which 80 Jews were killed and 369 injured. The other casualties being from the rebels.⁵⁹

Most of the operations were sabotage attacks on army or Jewish convoys, rather than military operations which needed planning and organising. However, there were a few operations which were planned during mid 1936. One such was the Nur-Shams battle led by 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, with about 50 men in June. This battle, which took place on the Nablus-Tulkarm road, against a British army convoy, was one of the early successes of the revolt. 'Abd al-Rahim divided his men into three groups - the first was to attack the front of the convoy, the second, in which he was included, was to attack the middle, while the third was to attack the rear. At the same time, they had to ensure that the convoy would not get reinforcements. This they did by placing men at the rear of the convoy on each side of the road to delay reinforcements from reaching them. The battle lasted for seven hours. According to rebel sources, three rebels were killed, British casualties were estimated to have been 50 killed and injured; and three army vehicles were damaged and one plane shot down.⁶⁰ According to British sources, between 21 and

⁵⁹ *Filastin*. Publication of the Higher Arab Committee. Beirut (1961-1974). Vol. XII. No. 15, p.115.

⁶⁰ Subhi Yassin, *Harb al-Isabat*. p.84; Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985, Dhinnabeh, Tulkarm, and Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, personal interview 9/4/1985. Tulkarm.

25 rebels were killed; they did not admit to any casualties on their side.⁶¹

During 1936, the rebels learned more about guerrilla warfare as a result of their own experiences. This expertise was put into practice during 1937, with subsequent improvements in the rebels fighting skills and tactics, as well as in the sort of targets of their operations.

"We were learning all the time. We learned how to deal with cordons. For example, if the leader was somewhere in a village, and we felt that the British would cordon off the village, we, the rest of the fasil, would attack them near to that place. So they were busy fighting us, and the leader, or whoever was under the cordon would escape. We used the same tactics in attacks. One Fasil would attack the British forces and keep them busy in one place, while the rest were carrying out the main attack nearby."⁶²

According to the annual report of the British Mandate administration in Palestine for the year 1937, the rebels military operations were as follows: 109 bomb attacks against the army and police, 143 against Jewish settlements, and two attacks on British personnel houses. The report also lists sabotage operations against government installations, as five instances of blowing up railways, 82 cutting of telegraph wires, one road blown up, three attacks on government buildings, and 18 attacks against Jewish property. Also listed were five assassination and attempted assassination against British army officers, 61 against British and Arab police officers, and 82 against Jews.⁶³

Compared to the attacks of 1936, those in 1937 were fewer in number. However, the difference in the quality of these attacks was substantial with regard to the kind of targets attacked, and the methods and tactics used, as well as in the actual clashes and battles. While in 1936 the rebels concentrated mostly on Jewish targets and settlements, Jewish quarters in towns, property and personnel, the attacks on Jews in 1937 became

⁶¹ Despatch from Gen. Peirse, 15/10/1936, WO 32/4117.

⁶² Mohammad Shuriedi, personal interview, 21/1/1985 Um al-Fahm.

⁶³ Colonial Office Report to the Council of the League of Nations, on the administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan. 1937, Co 814/12/1973.

less frequent, and the hostilities concentrated against the British. This change reflected the political situation in the country during 1937, especially after the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry and the resulting widespread disappointment among the Palestinians when it confirmed the British determination to continue with their support of the Jewish national home project. The Palestinians were also angry, especially those in Galilee, by the Commission's suggestion that Palestine should be partitioned, and Galilee be included in the proposed Jewish State. The Palestinians now realised that their main enemy was the British Mandate (see Chapter 4 above). Thus in 1937 the rebels concentrated their attacks on British targets.

Attacks on British army and Police vehicles and personnel continued, and there was a shift to other more economic and infra-structural targets such as government installations, the oil pipeline, transportation facilities, including railways and roads, and telegram and telephone wires. 1937 also witnessed development in the tactics and skills of the rebels, and the kind of weapons they used. For example, they began to use bomb attacks more frequently (see Chapter 6 on the arms). The rebels also became more able to conduct battles that lasting several hours with less casualties on their side than in 1936.

the year 1937 also saw the spread of the rebel centres of activity to the North as well as the South. The Galilee for example became a strong centre for rebel activities, especially after the publication of the Royal Commissions Report. In common with the rest of Palestine many large battles took place there in 1937 between the rebels and the British forces, such as the battle of Fassotah, and the battle of al-Layyat, where a huge number of Faza'h was used.⁶⁴

There were several factors which made it possible for the rebels in the Galilee to conduct successful guerrilla warfare against the British forces.

⁶⁴ Subhi Yassin, *al-thawra al-Arabiya*. p.103 and Ibrahim Hanna, personal interview 23/1/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee.

First, the close proximity to the Syrian and Lebanese borders represented an accessible withdrawal area, particularly as help was available to the rebels from villages on both sides of the border. Second, it was a point for easy and constant flow of arms and ammunition from Syria and Lebanon. And third, the close proximity of Galilee to Syria and Lebanon allowed ease of contact between the rebel leaders in the area and the Central Committee in Damascus - this being the main conduit for advice and supplies.

In 1937, it became more difficult for the British authorities to find and arrest rebels, despite the constant searches and cordons. The rebels had gained experience in escaping cordons and sieges, and were more capable of continuing a battle for long hours at the front lines. The revolt reached its peak in 1938, when every town and village was involved in the revolt one way or another. The rebel forces gained control over the rural areas in Palestine and parts of most of the towns, such as Nablus, Tulkarm, Jenin, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Gaza and Hebron. In that year, too, operations improved in quality and increased in number. They concentrated on two things, first, on attacking economic installations, like the oil pipelines, which were attacked 104 times in 1938; and second, on gaining control over the towns, which was evident from the constant rebel attacks on police stations in the towns, as well as by their short-term occupation of towns.

In addition to this, the number of attacks and operations in general considerably increased. The number of casualties in 1938 was also much higher than in the previous years: 63 British soldiers were killed and 200 were injured and 12 police officers were killed and 15 injured. This was in addition to 503 Arabs, both rebels and civilian killed and 598 injured.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Colonial Office Report to the council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan, 1938, CO 814/12, p.110

The operations and attacks in 1938 were as follows.⁶⁶

| | |
|--|-----|
| * Attacks on Jews | 176 |
| Attacks against Police and Army | 986 |
| Attacks on transportations | 335 |
| * Shooting at Jewish Settlements and Jewish quarters in towns | 651 |
| Throwing bombs | 331 |
| Kidnapping | 215 |
| * Sabotage of Jewish property | 410 |
| Sabotage of telephone lines | 720 |
| Sabotage of railways and roads | 341 |
| Sabotage of government properties | 210 |
| Sabotage of oil pipelines | 104 |
| Assassinations and attempted Assassinations | 490 |

The rebels tactics in 1938 were intensely on the offensive, and it was obvious that they were gaining strength and confidence. (see Chapter 4 for occupation of the towns).

"The leaders in the North called a meeting for all the fasa'il there. We met in al Bqia'h village in the Summer of 1938. The target was to attack the Police Station in Safad. We were divided up, and each group of fasils were responsible for a task. The plan was, for one group to block the two roads which led to Safad; and the remainder would go into the town. A number of fasa'il blocked the road which comes from Acre. The rest went inside the town and attacked the police station, clashed with the police force and then withdrew."⁶⁷

The Government's expenditure on security over the three years 1936-1939, provides a clear picture of the strength of the rebel forces, as the amount of money spent by the Government on Security considerably

⁶⁶ Ibid. pp.19-20

* There seems to be an overlap in the categories, but this was reported in the original document.

⁶⁷ Bulus Hanna Bulus, personal interview, 20/3/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee

increased each year. In 1936 the Government spent £P 641,276, while in 1937 the amount had risen £P 867.295. The greatest increase was in 1938, when the expenditure rose to £P 1,034,825.⁶⁸

One British ex-police officer in Palestine described with admiration the difficulties the police and army had in catching one of the rebel leaders.

"Among the Arab gangs that caused so much havoc to the Security Forces in Palestine, 'Aref 'Abdul Razzak stands head and shoulders above the others, because of his daring, his cheek and absolute scorn for those who tried to trap him by the conventional rules of Warfare. In an age when most of the gang leaders are forgotten, 'Arif, with his "Now you see me, now you don't" technique of fighting, will long remain one of the army's problem heroes, and will never be forgotten while a single policeman of that time is still living."⁶⁹

In the same year that the French authorities were raiding, closing down and arresting the revolt leaders in Damascus in 1939, the rebels in Palestine managed to carry out 952 different operations.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Reports of Colonial Office to the Council of the League of Nations, 1936, p.116; 1937, p.106 and 1938, p.110.

⁶⁹ Edward Horne, A Job Well Done. pp.229-230.

⁷⁰ The 16th Infantry Brigade Intelligence Summaries to the War Office. WO 201/2/134.

CHAPTER SIX

Supplies and Administration

Rebel Arms

A - Sources of Arms

During the revolt of 1936-39 in Palestine, the rebels were using light weapons, mainly rifles, pistols, mines and hand grenades. In spite of the fact that the rebels did not have a shortage of arms during the revolt, until 1939 obtaining weapons was not an easy task, and the variety of makes of the arms used reflected the various sources from which they came. During the revolt, the rebels had four main sources of arms. Firstly, there were the arms left by the Turkish army after the First World War. When the Turks were defeated in 1917 and the British army was occupying Palestine, many of the Turkish soldiers fled the country leaving their arms and ammunition behind.

"In the year when the British came, and Turkey was defeated, the woods in Palestine were full of rifles and ammunition. Arms were thrown here and there. People collected them and hid them. In some houses you could find two or even three rifles hidden."¹

"We used to get ammunition from Gaza. During the First World War, the Turks left a lot of arms hidden among cactus bushes in the Gaza area. We used to go and collect bullets from there and sell them".²

Another source of arms, and by far the most important, was the three Arab countries, Syria, Lebanon, and Trans-Jordan. Arms used in the Syrian Revolt of 1925, some of which were smuggled from Palestine during the Syrian revolt, were smuggled back to Palestine. ³ It is worth mentioning here that some of the Syrian rebels themselves joined the fight, along with Palestinian rebels in Palestine. Izzat Darwazah mentions the important role played by these Arab countries in the support of the Palestinian Arab revolt:

"Syria, Lebanon and Trans-Jordan, were one of the main sources, to supply the revolt with money, arms, volunteers, equipment, clothes etc..."⁴

The third source of arms was arms dealers. During the revolt, arms trading was a flourishing business, despite the hardship and dangers involved, and in smuggling arms into the country. In each area of the country there were arms dealers known to the people. For example, in the northern region of Palestine some men from Amqa and Kwikat villages were known to be arms dealers and smugglers.⁵ They bought arms from Syria and Lebanon and smuggled them into the country to sell in the northern areas of the country. In the Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm

1 Fawzi Jaradat, personal interview, 4/2/1985 Silat al-Harithiyah, Jenin.

2 Bashir Ibrahim, personal interview 15/7/1984 Zeita, Tulkarm

3 Yusif Rajab Radi'i. Thawrat 1936. p.54 and Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. p.209

4 Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. p.209

5 Raji al-Khatib, personal interview, 22/3/1985, Majd al-Kurum, Galilee

areas, the dealers from Silat al-Zahir village, were the best known arms dealers in the area.⁶

"There was one who traded with arms from Ya'bad, but this trade was for Silat al-Zahir merchants. These were trading with Turkey, selling chickens and other things; and bringing back merchandise from Turkey, Syria and Iraq, including arms".⁷

In the Jerusalem area, the most well known arms dealers' were from Arab al-Sawahreh, a bedouin tribe who resided near Beit Sahour, South of Jerusalem. They brought arms mainly from Trans-Jordan.⁸ In the Southern area of Palestine, Gaza and Beersheba, the bedouins tribe al-Rumailat, with other merchants from Yabna village, were known to get arms from Sinai on the Egyptian borders and sell them in the Gaza and Beersheba areas.⁹ Although the arms dealers were known to the people of their areas, the sale of arms had to take place secretly, concealed from the British authorities.

"When the arms dealers came to a village to sell weapons, they went to the house furthest in the village and told the owner they had arms to sell. The owner would then send for those in the village he knew wanted to buy. The bargaining took place in his house. The arms dealers would be his guests for the night; next day they moved to another village"¹⁰

However, not all of the arms sales were through traders. Some of the regional commanders or Fasil leaders took it upon themselves to buy arms for their men. One of their responsibilities was to make sure their men were well armed. They collected money from the villages or simply asked the village to provide the money for arms, and either the commander or fasil leader would go to Syria, Lebanon or Trans- Jordan

6 Mohammad Jaradat, personal interview 4/2/1985, Silat al-Harithya, Jenin.

7 Mohammad al-Kaylani, personal interview 12/1/1985, Ya'bad, Jenin

8 Ahmad al-Issawi, personal interview, April 1985 al-Issawiyah, Jerusalem.

9 Arafat al-Khatib, personal interview, 13/2/1985 al-Shati' refugee camp, Gaza.

10 Rabah al-'Awad, personal interview 17/2/1985 al-Mazra'h, Galilee.

(depending on his area of command) to get the weapons, or send a trustworthy person to buy them. In some cases, a leader asked arms dealers to provide him with the required quantity of arms.

"One day, after the prayers, I asked some of the Christian men to gather, and asked each of them to pay £P10. I collected £P120, which I gave to Bulus who was an expert on weapons, and another man. I asked them to go to Syria and buy arms for us. Bulus would choose the arms and the other man would pay for them. I told them to leave the arms in Syria, because someone else was going to smuggle them into the country. When the rifles came, I gave five to the Muslims and three or four to the Christians in the fasil"¹¹

Mubadda Farhat, who was a fasil leader in Majd al-Kurum village, went himself to buy the arms.

"when we asked the people to arm themselves, some did not know how or where to get arms. So, they gave me the money, and I went to Lebanon to buy the arms for them."¹²

Although some of the rebels paid for their own arms, and the villages also provided the arms of their fasils, there were large quantities of arms which were sent by the central committee for the Jihad in Damascus to the leaders of the areas, who in turn would distribute them among the fasa'il in their areas. ¹³

The most difficult task in the acquisition of arms was smuggling them into the country. This needed the special expertise of professional smugglers and it became even more difficult after the British authorities became aware of the arms traffic, and began to take steps to stop it.

"The British had put a fence along the borders with Syria and Lebanon to stop arms smuggling. We cut the fence and opened a passage on the Lebanese borders. We actually wanted to go to Syria, but we took the way from Lebanon. We entered a village called Bint Jubeil, but someone had informed the French authorities about our presence there, and we were arrested"¹⁴

11 Ibrahim Hanna, personal interview, 23/1/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee.

12 Mubadda Farhat, personal interview 21/3/1985, Majd al-Kurum, Galilee.

13 Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. p.213

14 Rabah al-'Awad, personal interview 17/2/1985, al-Mazra'h, Galilee.

The bedouins were the best known for their expertise as smugglers. This was quite natural, as the bedouins were constantly on the move from one area to the other, and in and out of the country across the borders. Before the British occupation, they travelled across the borders without impediment, and they continued to do so after the British occupation in spite of the restrictions. In many cases, part of a bedouin clan would be residing at one side of a border and the other part on the other side. Another reason the bedouins were such good smugglers, was because they travelled constantly, they knew the area very well. Thus they were able to find routes not known to the British authorities and to avoid any encounter with the British or French forces on either side of the borders. This applied to bedouins residing near the Syrian or Lebanese borders as well as to those bedouins on both sides of the Trans-Jordanian borders.

"Ahmad al Zinati, the Prince of al-Ghazawiyah tribe [a bedouin tribe residing in the Jordan valley, between Palestine and Trans-Jordan] was the one who helped in smuggling arms to us. He received the arms which were coming from Trans-Jordan, crossed the river [Jordan] and gave them to us on the other side of the border".¹⁵

All of the arms were carried on animals; horses, donkeys, mules and camels,¹⁶ or were carried by hand.

"I used to hide the arms in fig sacks. I had an old man with me. I put two or three fig sacks on his shoulder, as if I was selling figs. In this way, we would move from one place to the other easily"¹⁷

"Once Sheikh 'Atiyah came to Qabatiya, and told me to go and collect some weapons from a certain village I asked him if he had agreed with them on a pass word or a sign to recognise me. He said to say Hasan three times. We went at night and saw them coming towards us. We said the pass words and they gave us the weapons and ammunition which were on mules backs. We took them and distributed them among the villages of Miseliyah, Raba, Qabatiya and al-Mughaiyer".¹⁸

15 Hussein Badawi, personal interview, 8/4/1985. Aqqaba, Jenin.

16 Mohammad al-Kaylani, personal interview, 12/1/1985. Ya'bad, Jenin.

17 Ali 'Ukshiya, personal interview, 20/3/1985 Gaza.

18 Ahmad Nazal, personal interview. 1/4/1984 Qabatiya, Jenin.

It would not have been possible for arms smugglers or the rebels to move easily across the borders if they had not been helped by the Arabs on the other side. For example, the easy traffic between Palestine and Syria was largely due to the help of the Syrian nationalist 'Adel al-'Azmeah, who was at that period the General Director of the Ministry of Interior which ran the Gendarmeries guarding the borders, and this gendarmerie ignored the traffic which was flowing across the borders.¹⁹ During the negotiations between the French authorities and Syrian nationalists in 1936 on the French-Syrian Treaty, the French authorities appointed some of the Syrian nationalists in some government posts. The smuggling of arms to Palestine was on its highest level during that period. The rebels and arms moved from one country to another with ease until 1939 when the British and the French severely restricted movement.

"The four countries of Bilad al-Sham became one, as far as the revolt and the rebels were concerned, with no customs, no police, no army patrols, and no passports between them"²⁰

A further source of arms and ammunition was the British Police and army themselves, and the Jewish settlements.

"The rifles were very expensive, what could we do? We would go to a settlement and kill the guard and take his weapon. So we got some rifles from Rohovot, wad Hanin and from Beit Hanan settlements"²¹

The arms from the British forces were either collected after a clash with the army or police. The rebels could take the arms from the dead soldiers before reinforcements reached the scene. Alternatively, they actually stole arms from the British camps and posts. They either attacked a police post and took the weapons, or went into the camp at night and stole arms.

"The British had a post to guard the railway. One of the guards was working with the revolt. I asked him to let me

19 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.243

20 Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. p. 209

21 'Arafat al-Khatib, personal interview, 13/3/1985 al-Shati' Refugee Camp, Gaza.

get into the post while the soldiers were asleep, to steal some weapons. I went there and took a rifle and a pistol - a lighting pistol. Later, we sent some of our people to Gaza, where they started to send us weapons they managed to steal from the police in al-'Arish" ²²

According to Lt. General Haining, the Palestine Police were a good source of rifles, as their arms stores were an easy target for the rebels to raid and steal from. Firstly, because some of the Arabs in the police force were supporters of the revolt, and secondly they lacked the experience to fight back against the rebels' constant attacks. ²³ There were many supporters of the revolt among the Arabs in the police force, and these were able to provide the revolt with large quantities of arms and ammunition.²⁴

"Ibrahim 'Ali Hamdan from Tulkarm was a police officer in Khan Yunis, but he was doing a lot of things for the revolt. Once the rebels asked him to get ammunition. He brought a car and filled it with ammunition which he covered with a blanket, and put some flowers over the blanket. When he was on the road to Beit Dajan coming from Gaza, he met a British army convoy, he was wearing his uniform. When they asked him where his destination was, he told them that he was going to give a testimony in the court and that he was in a hurry. The officer in charge of the convoy gave him a pass to enable him to reach the court quickly. Thus he was able to deliver the ammunition to Beit Dajan and inform the rebels there that their village was under siege" ²⁵

B - Types of Weapons

The most common weapons used by the rebels were rifles. Almost all makes of rifles were used, depending on availability - British, French, Turkish, Russian, Italian, German, and Japanese. In one of the clashes with the rebels, the British forces found a Portuguese rifle which had been made in the Eighteenth Century and was still in working order. ²⁶

22 Ali 'Ukshiya, personal interview, 20/3/1985 Gaza

23 General Haining Report to the Colonial Office 30/11/1938, CO 733/379/75528/74/38

24 Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. p.208

25 Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, personal interview, 9/4/1985. Tulkarm. and Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/85 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

26 Yusif Rajab Radi'i, Thawrat 1936. p.54

"The rifle which I had was an English make. The leader of our fasil gave it to me. It belonged to the revolt. But it was not a good one - when you shot it once or twice it became very hot and the bullet wouldn't come out. Then I bought a better one".²⁷

There was also a wide variety of pistols. By the end of 1937, the rebels began to use machine guns, gained during clashes with the British forces. Hand grenades (Mills 36) were also gained from the British.²⁸ The rebels were inventive with what little that was available to them. Handmade grenades which looked like jam cans and were used mainly in towns, were manufactured locally.²⁹

However, they were most inventive in making mines, using very ordinary materials such as pipes, sugar, gun powder, or potassium and nails. Mohammad Wadi, who was the mines specialist in the area between Ramleh and Jaffa, which was under the leadership of Sheikh Hasan Salameh, learned to make mines when he was doing quarry work. He used his expertise to lay mines during the revolt.

"I brought a meter and a quarter of four inch pipe and punched two holes in the middle. After blocking one of the ends, I filled it with a mixture of potassium and sugar. These materials, when burned, make a strong explosion. I put a pencil in each of the two holes. I would beforehand have asked the blacksmith to make a piece of iron, 5cm wide, with two holes the same size and spacing as the holes in the pipe, and to put two no 17mm nails in the holes. When I wanted to plant the mine, I would dig a hole in the ground and put the pipe in it with the two holes facing upwards. I then took the pencils off and filled the holes with caps. But if I put the two nails attached to the iron piece in the holes with the caps already in, I would kill myself, because when the nails touch the caps they will burn, and the material inside the pipe would explode. So first, I fixed two springs to the nails and the pipe would explode if a weight pushed the nails into the holes, burning the caps. I covered the mine with a cloth so the dirt would not come inside the holes, and covered it all with soil so it could not be seen. When the army vehicle ran over it, its weight would push the nails inside the holes, burned the caps which in turn burn the material inside the pipe and the mine exploded"³⁰

27 Bashir Ibrahim, personal interview, 15/7/1984 Zeita, Tulkarm.

28 Yusif Rajab Radi'i, Thawrat 1936. p.54

29 Ibid. p.55

30 Mohammad Wadi, personal interview, May 1985. Amman, Jordan

The method described above was the most primitive way of laying mines, but it was widely used by rebels in all areas of Palestine. However, the rebels were also learning and they became more inventive.

"Later, they began to be more creative, so they started to use batteries to ignite the mine from a distance. They did this by connecting a wire to a battery which was attached to the mine. This way it was more practical and more efficient. We started to use mines with batteries in 1938"³¹

The mines were mainly used on roads against military vehicles, and to sabotage railways. The rebels also used cannon shells, stolen from British camps, to make mines for demolishing railways and bridges, and these were also used as land mines.³² For ammunition, they re-used empty bullet shells, refilled with gun powder, to which they attached new caps, or they used old unexploded bullets collected after the Turkish army evacuated the country, to which they also added new caps.³³

There were some experts in repairing broken weapons and making modifications for new ones. In the north of Palestine two weapons repair experts were known (during the research, no other names were mentioned)

"my father was an expert in repairing railways and weapons. That's why the Turks took him with them to Syria and Trans-Jordan during the First World War. I learned this skill from him when I was very young. Only I and Philip from Tarshiha knew how to repair weapons in the north of Palestine. All the Lebanese villages on the Palestine borders came to me to repair their weapons. I can repair all sorts of light weapons - Russian, English, French, Turkish Italian. I also used to make artificial legs which we [he and his father] made by hand, without using any machines. When the rebels want to repair their weapons they brought letters with them from their leaders bearing the revolt's seal"³⁴

31 Bashir Ibrahim, personal interview, 15/7/1984. Zeita, Tulkarm.

32 Yusif Rajab Radi'i, Thawrat 1936. p. 55

33 Bashir Ibrahim, personal interview, 15/7/1984. Zeita, Tulkarm.

34 Bulus Hanna Bulus, personal interview, 30/3/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee.

c - Training

Most of the rebels did not have proper military training, except for those who were in the area of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm, during the training sessions which were held by al-Qawuqji during his short stay in Palestine (as previously mentioned in Chapter Five)

"I was trained on arms for three months by al-Qawuqji himself. Then, I began to train others. Many were like me, trained by al-Qawuqji so as to train others. We used to train on the hills of Qabatiya, 'Illar, Wad al-Mai, to the west of 'Ara and 'Ar'ra, and near Bal'a"³⁵

The training of the rebels in other areas, especially those areas furthest from the centre, was rudimentary and very basic, mainly giving instructions in how to hit a target and reload the rifle. In these areas such as the Galilee or the south, the fasil leaders took it upon themselves to train their men despite the fact that they themselves, usually lacked any previous training or experience.

"The revolt was not organised militarily. There were revolutionary men who were doing the best they could. We used to sit on the mountain and they [fasil leaders] would put a target to aim at, so as to teach us how to hit a target. That was all the training we had. We did not have any training camps to learn how to face the enemy or how to withdraw and so forth."³⁶

Some of the rebels who served in the Turkish army or in the Palestine Police were also training some of the rebels in their areas to use arms and other basic training.

"Some of those who were in the Turkish army or the Palestine Police, took it upon themselves to train the rebels. We used to send the new recruits to them for three or four days to be trained. I myself was trained in Ya'bad area by a retired police officer. I did not know where he was from, but he trained me with tens of others".³⁷

Ibrahim Qasim was a police school graduate who was with the leader Abu Durra for one year. His training as a policeman

35 Ahmad Naza1, personal interview, 1/4/1984, Qabatiya, Jenin.

36 Hussien Baytam, personal interview, 21/2/1985, Abu-Snan, Galilee.

37 Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview, 21/1/1985, Um al-Fahm.

was effectively used to train other rebels.

"I for example, was a police officer before the revolt. I am a graduate from the police school. I was trained to use arms when I was with the police, where I stayed for three years. After that I joined the revolt." ³⁸

Nevertheless, many other rebels did not have any training and they gained the knowledge they needed to handle weapons through experience.

"We trained like this; when we had the arms everyone took his piece of weapon and went out at night, to shoot and hide" ³⁹

Some others did not think that they needed training.

"We trained each other. I taught myself. What does it need to handle a rifle? It is only a piece of metal in your hands, and you work it as you want. All it needs is good aiming and you can hit the target" ⁴⁰

However, during the years of constant fighting and clashes during the revolt, the rebels were gaining more experience, and were developing their fighting skills as well as their organisation. (see Chapter 5).

Supplies: Money, Clothing and Food

The revolt was supported by two main sources of money, the first was donations from the Arab people in the neighbouring Arab countries, such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Trans-Jordan.⁴¹ In Syria for example, the Syrian Palestine Defence Committee which included some of the most prominent Syrian nationalists, such as Nabih al-'Azmeh and Nasib al-Bakri, ⁴² was helping the Central Committee for the Jihad by collecting donations and organising the buying and smuggling of arms to Palestine. The money collected from the Arab World was sent to the Central

38 Ibrahim Qasim personal interview. 21/1/85 Musmus, (near Um al-Fahm)

39 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rantisi, personal interview, 4/3/85, Ramallah

40 Ali 'Ukshiya, personal interview, 20/3/85, Gaza.

41 Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. p.209

42 Y. Porath, The Palestinian Arab National Movement. p.242

Committee, which in turn, distributed part of it among the rebel leaders in Palestine, and the remainder was used to buy arms and other supplies for the revolt.

"We used to get money from the Higher Arab Committee. They used to send us money once every month or two. It was not a fixed amount. It used to vary each time."⁴³

The other source of money was donations collected from rich Palestinians in the country and from merchants and landlords, mainly in the towns.

"many rich people from Nablus and Tulkarm who were supporters of the revolt, were giving money to the revolt"⁴⁴

"The rebels in the towns used to collect money for the revolt from big merchants and the inhabitants of the towns. We sometimes used to ask them to pay the amount which they could afford, and sometimes we agreed with them to pay it in installments"⁴⁵

However, not all of these donations were paid voluntarily. In fact, many of the merchants were forced to pay a kind of tax to the revolt.

There were various committees collecting money for the revolt. Some of these were formed during the general strike in 1936 to give aid and support some of the strikers who were in need. Some of these committees continued to work during the revolt to collect donations and other supplies for the revolt. These included the Women's Committees and the Women's Charitable Societies, which were formed in the towns were active in this field. Chambers of Commerce in some of the towns were also supporting the revolt financially. For example the Chamber Commerce of Ramalla was supporting 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad,⁴⁶ while the Chamber of Commerce in Gaza was supporting the rebel fasa'il in the Gaza area.⁴⁷

43 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm

44 Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, personal interview, 9/4/1985, Tulkarm

45 'Ali Zayadneh, personal interview, 16/4/1985. Tamra, Galilee.

46 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

47 'Ali 'Ukshiya, personal interview, 20/3/1985, Gaza

To avoid unauthorised collection of donations in the name of the revolt, either by some rebels who might use it for other purposes than the support of the revolt or by opportunists who might find it as an easy way to make money, the general command of each area had a special receipt printed.⁴⁸

"Each person that donated money to the revolt was given a printed receipt. I found a receipt which was signed and sealed by the General Commander of the revolt, 'Abd al-Raziq, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, and Hasan Salameh"⁴⁹

It is important to note that the rebel fasa'il in the northern regions of Palestine were in direct contact with the Central Committee in Damascus. Thus the receipts which were given to the donors were signed by Emil al-Ghuri, who was a member of the Central Committee.

"When we were collecting money in Acre area for the revolt, we used to give receipts with the amount donated. These receipts were official. The ones I used had a picture of a rebel with a rifle printed on its top, and it was signed by Emil al-Ghuri"⁵⁰

Perhaps the most interesting receipt given by a revolt commander was that which was sent by 'Abd al-Raziq to the Mandatory Government, dated the 9th of August, 1938.

"Received from the Mandatory Government of Palestine the sum of £P90 (of which £P87 was in notes and the remainder in silver) for the defence of Palestine (signed) Aref Abdul Razek. (Seal)"⁵¹

In this receipt 'Abd al-Raziq did not mention how or where he obtained the money, but one can speculate that this money was stolen from a place or a person of official nature.

The General Command of the revolt had issued many communiques, warning the public about those who collected money in the name of the

48 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

49 Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, personal interviews 2/2/1985 and 20/4/1985. al-Taybah, Triangle

50 'Ali Zayadnah, personal interview, 16/4/1985 Tamra, Galilee.

51 A copy from the Mandate Government to the Colonial Office, CO 733/372

revolt without any authorisation or official receipts. In one such communique, issued on the 18th August, 1938, there was a condemnation of these acts and a promise to bring the offenders to trial in the Rebels Court.

"It is repeatedly brought to our notice that some persons of low character, in the name of the Arab Command, beg and forcibly dispossess people of their personal property. The Arab Command emphatically condemns this despicable action, to which it is no party.

The Arab Command has already published a notice prohibiting this, and we now renew the warning to such offenders who waylay and burden the inhabitants and merchants with these despicable demands and deceive in the name of the Arab Command, which is above polluting the name of the revolution with such meanness..."⁵²

The money collected locally or sent by the Central Committee in Damascus to the leaders of the revolt was spent in different directions, to buy arms and clothing for the rebels.⁵³

"The revolt used to give money to the head of the fasil. Sums of it went to buy arms and clothing, and sums to distribute among the men"⁵⁴

Another type of expenditure was small monthly payments given to rebels for the support of their families. This money was not considered as wages, but rather as a help.⁵⁵ According to Yassin, the amount of payment was distributed according to rank.

"there were no wages for any of the rebels. However, the leadership was paying some monthly payments, according to the rank, £P2 for the soldier, £P4 for the fasil head, and the clerk, £P5 for the leader assistant and £P6 for the leader. These payments were not fixed or compulsory, but were paid in a form of aid, in some months".⁵⁶

These payments were only paid for the full-time rebels. The Faza'h rebels did not take any money.

52 Translation of Communique by General Command of the Revolt. Issued 18/8/1938. Co. 733/372/4

53 'Ali Zayadneh, personal interview, 16/4/1985. Tamra Galilee. and 'Ali 'Ukshiya, personal interview, 20/3/1985, Gaza.

54 Hussein Baytam, personal interview 21/2/1985, Abu-Snan, Galilee.

55 Fadil al-'Id, personal interview 23/3/1985 Kabu1, Galilee

56 Subhi Yassin, al-Thawra al-Arabiya. p.44

"there were no official wages paid to the rebels. The revolt used to give to the rebels when they visited their families, an amount of money, between 10 to 15 Palestinian Pounds, in addition to some expenses, to enable them to buy some supplies for their families, such as flour, olive oil, etc."⁵⁷

Some of the money went also to help the families of those rebels who were killed or injured in the revolt and were not able to support themselves.⁵⁸

"I used to go to the families of the martyrs and give each family a sum of money, or about 10 Palestinian Pounds, depending on the number of children in the family."⁵⁹

The money which came from the Central Committee in Damascus or which was collected by the authorisation of the General Commanders usually went to the General Commanders, who after deducting their needs and expenditures, such as paying their guards and other administrative expenses, distributed the money among their regional commanders. These would also deduct for their needs and distribute the rest to their fasil leaders. They would spend it as detailed above. However, some fasil leaders would sometimes collect money in their own areas in addition to that sent to them by their superiors.⁶⁰

A small amount of money was spent on food by the rebels, because food was constantly supplied by local people throughout the revolt. When the people of a village heard of the presence of rebels near their village, they would bring them food and drink for the duration of their stay. Sometimes, when the rebels were passing near a village, one would be sent to get food from the village. This was always given willingly.⁶¹ In the villages, they called sending food for the rebels Khuruj (getting out), which meant that when the rebels were around, everyone of the village

57 Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview, 2/1/85 Um al-Fahm.

58 Ibid.

59 Shakir Milhim, personal interview. 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

60 Ahmad Nazal, personal interview, 1/4/1984, Qabatiya, Jenin.

61 Hussein Baytam, personal interview, 21/2/1985. Abu-Snan, Galilee

would share in feeding them by offering some food and collectively the village would be able to feed the rebels.⁶²

"The peasants did not only take the burden of providing arms and men, they also assumed the burden of providing food and drink for the rebels, and of hiding and accommodating them in their houses and villages. When I was in Bal'a, we were in a mountain with al-Qawuqji, when I felt hungry, I used to get bread from a room full of bread, which had been brought by the peasants. Until two or three in the morning, women would still be coming with more bread cheese, olives and water".⁶³

The rebels also used to get donations of food, coffee, tea or cigarettes, which were usually stored at someone's house. For example, in Silat al-Harithiya village Abu-Durra had entrusted such a store to one man, and when he needed any thing from the store he sent a rebel with sealed papers to the store keeper.⁶⁴ Other such stores were in Dhinnabah,⁶⁵ and in Um al-Fahm.

"There was a supplies store in Um al-Fahm for the revolt. People used to send us things such as 100 cartons of cigarettes, or 1,000 boiled eggs; and we gave them to a person to store for us in his house."⁶⁶

However, sometimes the reverse would happen in that some of the poor families would ask the fasil leader or the one responsible for the rebels supplies for food.

"If a woman comes to Abu-Durra and tells him that her family is hungry, and she can't feed them, he would give her a paper, sealed with his seal, asking the man in charge of supplies to give her what she needs."⁶⁷

The rebels paid very little for medical care. There were doctors in many areas who volunteered to attend to the injured without payment.⁶⁸

62 Salih Baransi, personal interview, May 1985, London

63 Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/1985 Amman.

64 Mohammad Jaradat, personal interview, 4/2/1985 Silat al-Harithiya, Jenin.

65 Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad personal interview, 9/4/1985. Tulkarm, and Shakir Milhim, personal interview 6/4/1985 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

66 Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview, 2/1/1985 Um al-Fahm.

67 Mohammad Jaradat, personal interview, 4/2/1985 Silat al-Harithiyah.

68 Mohammad Wadi, personal interview, May 1985 Amman Jordan.

"There were doctors who volunteered to help. They would go to the mountains to attend to the injured during a clash. The injured were removed to a village, where the doctor attended him. Our injured were not taken to hospitals"⁶⁹

The injured were not taken to hospitals, in order not to draw their presence to the attention of the authorities.

"When Hasan Salameh was injured in his shoulder, we took him to our village al-Muzer'a, where Doctor Hamdi al-Taji was coming from Lydda and Ramleh to attend him, until he got better".⁷⁰

"When Abu Kamal ('Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad) was injured, I went to Dr. Fuad Da'das, a Christian and very patriotic doctor. He used to live in Tulkarm, and used to attend to rebels wounded wherever they were, at day and at night. He used to say: let me die as a martyr like them. He came and took care of Abu-Kamal's wounds"⁷¹

For critical injuries, where hospitalisation was required, men would be sent to Lebanon or Syria.⁷² The Northern region of Palestine sent almost all injured to Syria or Lebanon, being close to their borders.

"If any one of us was injured, he would be taken to Syria or Lebanon for medical care. I was taken to Lebanon when I was injured in a battle".⁷³

Laws and Legislation

In the Summer of 1938 when some of the rebel leaders met in Ghassaneh and decided to form the Bureau of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, they decided at the same meeting to set up committees which would be responsible for organising the administrative side of the revolt. Thus four committees were formed: a committee for publications, a committee for finance, a committee for public relations, and a legislative committee.

69 'Abd al-'Aziz Shamaliya, personal interview, 30/9/1984, Silat al-Zahir.

70 Mohammad Wadi, personal interview, May 1985. Amman, Jordan

71 Shakir Milhim, personal interview 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

72 Izzat Darwazah, al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya. p.209

73 Salih 'Ayyoush, personal interview 19/2/1985. Sakhnin, Galilee.

The committee members were chosen by the rebel leaders at Deir Ghassaneh Conference.

The committee for publications was responsible for printing and distributing the revolt communiques, as well as any orders issued by the revolt Commanders, either to the rebels, or to the public.⁷⁴

"The public was getting the revolt's orders by pamphlets which were stuck on the walls in the towns and villages, as the revolt did not have a radio station, for example."⁷⁵

The finance committee was responsible for money coming in for the revolt and for keeping a record of expenditure, as well as being responsible for supplies to the revolt. ⁷⁶The committee of public relations maintained direct communication with the people. Its functions were similar to those of municipalities; to observe the needs of the public in a situation of civil disobedience and lack of government services.⁷⁷ As people stopped paying taxes, many services were stopped, such as checking the hygiene of shops which sold meat or dairy products. According to this Committee's recommendations, the Legislative Committee would pass laws to the public concerning domestic issues, such as prices, or quality of goods sold.

"The General Command of The Arab Revolt in Palestine A Communique to the Butchers:-

It was brought to the notice of the General Command that you do not follow the health instructions concerning the quality of meat you sell to the public, and by doing so, you are endangering the health of the public. The Arab Command is warning you, that you should follow the municipal instructions concerning health in connection with your work. Any Butcher who does not obey these instructions will be severely punished.

(Signed) 'Aref 'Abd al-Raziq"⁷⁸

74 Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, personal interview, 9/4/1985, Tulkarm; and Hussein Badawi, personal interview 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin.

75 Faisal 'Arif Abd al-Raziq. personal interviews 2/2/1985 and 20/4/1985. al-Taybah, Triangle

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 A translation from Arabic, 1938. nd. document In my possession.

This Committee could also issue ordinances concerning economic situations.

**"September 20 1938
In The Name of God the Compassionate,
The Merciful.**

The noble Arab public is hereby notified that, because of the current economic crisis which presses all classes of the people, the following has been ordained:-

- 1. A moratorium on debts will be effective from Sep.1, 1938 indefinitely.**
- 2. Actions of Courts and Collections in respect to debts will be discontinued.**
- 3. Everyone who contravenes will be arrested and taken to the strongholds of the Mujahedeen, the bearers of the promises of freedom and independence and will be fined £P50. and will be flogged for the first time.**
- 4. At the repetition of the offence, the creditor will be executed merely at the complaint of the debtor who must produce two righteous witnesses to prove that he has been pressed by his creditor.**
- 5. Anyone who removes this notice will be severely punished There are everywhere observing eyes, He who has given warning is not to blame. Please be with the righteous.**

**The Mijahid for the Sake of God
and the Holy Fatherland
(Signed) Saadee-Din El-Bashir⁷⁹**

The formation of these committees demonstrated a concern about the well-being of the public, and the attempt at the same time to fill the gap caused by the absence of government services, because of civil disobedience during the revolt. It also demonstrated the hegemony of the revolt over public affairs.

Many of the laws which were issued by the revolt were to counter the measures of the Government which was trying to crush the revolt. For

example, the Government had issued an order that all the people of Palestine should obtain an identity card if they wished to travel from one town to the other, and to obtain a license for every car or vehicle that moved on the roads. This order was made in order to identify the rebels and to contain their movements. The leaders of the revolt issued a counter order in which they asked the people to refuse to apply for the identity cards and the licenses. In a communique issued by the Bureau of the Arab Revolt in Palestine in 1938, and signed by the five leaders members of this Bureau, these leaders praised the Arab population for obeying the order "in spite of what the tyrant government's measures to drive people into starvation..."⁸⁰. In the same communique, the leaders of the revolt allowed the population to obtain identity cards and licenses, because:

"The British Government announced that it will reconsider the Arab demands, and after the Minister of Justice declared that the Arab cause in Palestine was just".⁸¹

In August 1938 the revolt issued an order asking the men in the towns to wear the traditional head dress (Kuffiyah and Iqal), which was usually worn by the villagers. The reason behind this order was that the British, having failed to arrest the rebels, began to arrest any man found in the towns wearing the traditional headdress.⁸² The men in the towns used to wear the tarbush or fez, and all the rebels (being villagers) wore the traditional headdress. When the order was issued, most of the men in the towns changed into traditional headdress, making it impossible for the British to distinguish between a villager and a townsman.

In August 1938, a newspaper for the revolt was published in the northern region of the country. Al-Jihad reported news of the revolt, clashes, casualties and the results of the rebel courts. In the first issue of this newspaper was the explanation of the purpose of its publication:-

80 Akram Zueiter, *Watha'iq al-Haraka*. Document No. 382, p.552.

81 Ibid.

82 Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filastiniya*. p.207

"In addition to what His Majesty's soldiers have committed in torturing and maltreating the peaceful men and women in the villages, these monstrous and barbaric acts, were not even committed by the wild beasts in Central Africa. In addition to this, the British Government had recently prevented the Arab press from publishing anything related to the soldier's actions or any clashes between British soldiers and Mujahideen. The clashes which consequences were bad on the British soldiers. By doing so, the Government is trying to keep the world ignorant of its actions in the Holy Land, and to prevent the number of its casualties becoming known. Therefore, with full trust in God, and to let the truth be known, and to publish the truth about the clashes in the northern region, we hereby decided to publish this newspaper, to be the mouthpiece of the heroic Mujahidin..."⁸³

Communications and Intelligence

The Communiques issued by the revolt were either stuck on the walls in villages and towns, or distributed by hand.⁸⁴ Each leader had his own secretariat body which issued and typed his communiques,⁸⁵ as well as contacts with press houses to publish communiques and orders on a large scale for distribution throughout the country.⁸⁶ The communications between the commanders and the fasa'il leaders, or between the different fasa'il, was only via messengers. Usually the commanders had more than one messenger to deliver their messages to the heads of the fasa'il or others with whom they were in contact. Messengers carried letters or oral messages.⁸⁷

"they used to send a message to me. For example he would tell me that the leader wants to see me"⁸⁸

83 Akram Zueiter, *Watha'iq al-Haraka*. Document No. 296. p.487

84 Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview, 21/1/1985. Um al-Fahm.

85 Izzat Darwazah, *al-Qadiya al-Filasttiniya*. p.217

86 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

87 Mohammad al-Shuriedi, personal interview. 21/1/1985, Um al-Fahm.

88 Raji al-Khatib. personal interview, 22/3/1985. Majd al-Kurum. Galilee.

The leaders also used a quicker way to send a message to the fasa'il in their area. They used coloured flags and the movement of the flag raised from a high point would be spotted by the other fasil on the other side of the mountain and decoded. Each movement or colour meant a different message.

"Once a group of rebels was in Wadi Tira, near Haifa. 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq was among them, they were to meet an Englishman who wanted to see the rebels. The Englishman, asked 'Abd al-Raziq whether the rebels had a wireless to communicate. 'Abd al-Raziq said yes we have, and showed him a flag he uses to send messages by signs. He gave a sign to the flag man, who started to move the flag to the north, the south, the west and the east. 'Abd al-Raziq told the Englishman that he had just sent a message which would be received as far in the south as Rafah, and as far north as al Naqura. the message read 'be ready'"⁸⁹

Each leader had his own network of informers in the town and villages. These informers were to collect information about the movement of the police and army, in the areas which they were located, and to inform the leader, usually by a messenger.

" 'Abdulla al-Shalaf was a fasil head in the Western Plain, near Jaffa. he was always moving from one place to another to give information to 'Abd al-Raziq. He was our Intelligence there. He had eight working with him day and night. If anything happened, any soldiers gathering, for example, he sent the information to us" ⁹⁰

These informers were not usually known to the people. They also kept constant watch over land brokers and collaborators. The rebel informers could be from the rebels themselves who would inform their leaders of the presence of collaborators, or could be appointed by the fasil leaders in villages. Many a time, people who were not regular informers, volunteered information to the rebels about land sales, or about collaborators. According to Shakir Milhim some would walk for miles to come and inform 'Abd al-Raziq about the British troops movements, or

89 Ahmad Nazal, personal interview, 1/4/1984. Qabatiya, Jenin

90 Shakir Milhim, personal interview 6/4/85 Dhinnibah, Tulkarm.

volunteer information on how many times a certain person had visited the government house, or the police.⁹¹

The leaders also depended on some of the Arabs in the Palestine Police who supported the revolt, and gave them very useful information about the movements of the police and army.

"there was an Arab police officer, his name was al-Qadumi from Qalqiliya. He used to give us information about the army or the police. He used to spend, sometimes, days in search for us to give us the information personally, or send a piece of paper with a messenger. For example that the army was going to such and such an area at a certain time"⁹²

Also the Arab policeman gave the leaders information about collaborators who come to inform about the revolt to the police station or the army headquarters.

"Zuhair al-'Abdullah was a policeman, who used to give us information about collaborators and informers. He was very good. But they [collaborators] killed him".⁹³

"There was a Christian policeman working at Morton's office in Jenin Police Headquarters. He used to take the letters sent to Morton by Arabs to Abu Durra. After Abu-Durra read them, this policeman would put them back in Mortons drawer"⁹⁴

The Rebel Courts

In his Second Communique as a General Commander of the rebel forces, al Qawuqji announced on the 4th September 1936, the formation of a rebel court:

"Its first priority was to secure justice and to maintain security and order in the country, and to put an end to treachery, collaboration and corruption. The General Command have empowered this court with the authority to do its duties, and to judge and punish. All its ruling will be absolute, after they have been verified by the General

91 Ibid.

92 Kayd Bal'um. personal interview. 22/4/1985 al-Taybah. Triangle.

93 Yusif 'Awad. personal interview. April 1984. Maythaloun, Jenin.

94 Salim 'Abd al-Haq. personal interview. 20/5/1984 Silat al-Harithiya.

Command... We inform the public to obey all rulings and orders issued by this Court, and ask them to come forward with their disputes".⁹⁵

This Court was based in the triangle area formed by the three towns of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm, in Central Palestine, where Qawuqji was based. Its members included, Mohammad al Ashmar a Syrian volunteer, Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad,⁹⁶ and Munir al-Rayis another Syrian volunteer.

This was not, however, the only public court to be established in the country in the earlier days of the revolt. In fact, since civil disobedience was declared at the Conference of the National Committees which was held in Jerusalem on 7th of May 1936, vast majority of the Arab population of Palestine stopped using the Mandate Courts. The National Committees which were formed in most of the towns and villages at the beginning of the General Strike replaced the Mandate Civil Courts in solving public problems and disputes.⁹⁷

"In each village they used to choose a Committee of four or five elderly men who were known for their wisdom and good reputation. In those days no one went to the State courts or to the police, and all disputes were investigated by the Committee of the village, and the people accepted its judgment"⁹⁸

National Committees in the town also took on the task of solving disputes and problems for their townspeople. The Committees dealt with small cases, such as fights, disputes over land or property, and family disputes. More complicated cases requiring heavier penalties, involving crimes such as rape, murder and collaboration with the enemy, would be passed to the regional commander or the leader of the area, if the offence required the death penalty.⁹⁹

95 Communique No 2 of the General Command of the Arab Revolt in Palestine in A.W. Kayyali (ed.), Watha'iq al-Muqawama, Beirut, 1968, p.436.

96 Yusif Rajab al-Radi'i, *Thawrat 1936*. p.49

97 'Ali 'Ukshyia, personal interview, 20/3/1985, Gaza.

98 'Ali Zayadneh, personal interview, 16/4/1985, Tamra, Galilee.

99. Bashire Ibrahim, personal interview, 15/7/84 Zeita, Tulkarm. He was appointed as a rebel judge by the regional commander of his area during the revolt.

Throughout the revolt, the *fasil* leaders used to set up courts and trials to solve the people's problems in the villages they visited or camped near by. The judgment of the *fasil* leader was usually accepted to end a dispute, but if one of the parties in the dispute felt that their side was not investigated thoroughly, they could appeal to the regional commander or area leader.

Towards the end of 1936, when al-Qawuqji had left Palestine and each of the rebel leaders became independent in his area, they also had set trials and courts in the areas under their command. But during the second phase of the revolt in 1937, when the revolt was spreading fast and more people were joining in, the leaders found less time to deal with people's disputes. Each of them then chose a body headed by a person whose judgment they could trust to act as a judge to deal with public disputes. This was the second attempt to set up some kind of organised public courts.¹⁰⁰

In 1938, at the Deir Ghassaneh meeting of leaders when the Bureau of the Arab Revolt in Palestine was formed, a Central Court for the revolt was also set up. It was headed by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Yusif 'Abd al-Hadi of Arrabeh near Jenin, and the membership of 'Abd al-Fattah Samara from Dhinnabah near Tulkarm and Diya' 'Abduh from Nablus.¹⁰¹ This court was very successful, and even *fasa'il* leaders and regional commanders from various areas were bound by its decisions.¹⁰² There were so many cases brought to this court by the public that it was unable to deal them all. Thus lower courts were established in different regions to deal with the cases and the original court became a Higher Court for appeal.¹⁰³ There were already courts which were set up by the regional

100 Ibid.

101 Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, personal interviews 2/2/1985 and 20/4/1985, al-Taybah, Triangle.

102 Bashir Ibrahim, personal interview, 15/7/1984, Zeita, Tulkarm,

103 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985, Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

commanders in their areas some courts were set up by the commanders in areas where they did not already exist.

"The revolt Commanders had set up courts in various parts of the Country. There were Civil Courts, Military Courts, and a Higher Court for appeal, whose responsibility was to pass death penalties"¹⁰⁴

The lower courts dealt with all sorts of cases put forward to them by the public, including family disputes and disputes over land. They also dealt with military cases such as bringing to trial rebels who committed crimes, or collaborators. However, many of these commanders set up courts and passed judgments, even the death penalty, without referring to the Central Court. There were no established rules on which the fasil leader would base his judgment. The judgement would usually be passed according to what he personally believed to be correct. The fasil leader, who as mentioned above would be operating in his own area could be affected by clan alliances or kinship, which meant his judgment would sometimes be biased towards these interests rather than based on acceptable norms of justice. The defendant did not usually have any one to act as his advocate.

Many of the regional commanders also set up smaller courts in different areas of their regions and chose as their head judges either members of the public or men in their fasail. These smaller courts dealt with minor disputes, and passed the more complicated ones to their commanders.¹⁰⁵

"The regional commander and fasil leaders chose me to be the rebels court judge. I was authorised to bring to trial anyone even if he was a fasil leader, as long as I informed them of his offence. In the bigger cases they would make a court themselves, and ask me to provide the investigation evidence and charges, and they would pass the judgment".¹⁰⁶

104 Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, personal interviews, 2/2/85 and 20/4/1985 al-Taybah, Triangle.

105 Bashir Ibrahim, personal interview. 15/7/1984. Zeita, Tulkarm.

106 Ibid.

Bashir Ibrahim was chosen by his regional commander and the fasa'il leaders in his area to be the judge. He had full authority to pass judgment on smaller cases such as family disputes, but in the bigger cases, especially those which involved one of the rebels or a collaborator, he played the role of a prosecutor. He gathered evidence and presented it to the court which would be set up by higher ranking officers, such as fasil leaders, regional commanders, or even the area leader himself, as the following example elaborates:

"Two men stole money, gold, and a pistol from some Bedouins in the area. One of these thieves was a body guard for 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, the General Commander of the revolt. The bedouins came to press charges against them. I made the investigation and took the findings to the regional commander and the fasil leaders. They wrote to 'Abd al-Rahim, asking him to send his man to stand trial. As a result of their insistence the trial was set up, headed by the regional commander and the fasa'il leaders, with the presence of the two defendants. After the hearing, the plaintiff was asked to find his gold from a pile different golden objects, and his pistol from another pile. When he did, the court gave him his things back. The argument started in the Courtroom. Some of the judges wanted the death penalty by shooting. But they finally agreed to give them 50 lashes each, and make them walk with the rebels barefooted.* They also were exiled from the region"¹⁰⁷

The Rebel Court System in the Central regions of Palestine, namely the triangle area, (Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarm), where the Central Court was established had a more complicated and sophisticated court system than that in the Northern regions, of the Galilee, or the Southern region of Gaza. In the central region the court had an almost hierarchical system of civil courts to deal with public disputes, military courts to deal with crimes committed by rebels, and a higher court of appeal. They had also judges, ceremonies, and even robes and wigs. Some of these courts had even adopted the British judicial system; there

* To walk barefooted and bareheaded was a shameful thing for the peasant in Palestine. It could be immediately noticed that the person had done a shameful thing and was punished this way. It is a habit in Palestine for a peasant to take off his head-dress to show he was insulted.

107 Ibid.

were appeal courts and military courts dealing with collaborators and informers. Each court had the same divisions, judges, witnesses, prison guards etc.¹⁰⁸

"They were copying the English Courts. Here, you found them wearing red; and elsewhere another colour. And those helmets on their heads - they were really impressive."¹⁰⁹

Punishment by imprisonment meant either putting the person in a dry well for the duration of his sentence, or keeping him in a locked room provided by the village where the Court took place. According to Shakir Milhim

"when we used to move from one area to the other we would take the prisoners with us and lock them, in a room in the other village. The imprisonment punishment meant that the prisoners will not be able to go and visit their families"¹¹⁰

In the northern regions however, the system was much simpler and the trials were conducted by the regional commanders when they visited areas or camped nearby. Often the fasil leaders played the roles of judges and executioners as this example elaborates:

"A man from al Ghassaneh village was engaged to his cousin but her brothers refused to let him marry her. He came to me for help, and I told him that I was going somewhere, but would deal with the matter later. When I was in the village I was visiting, the army came and put a siege around it. I knew that this man had informed the authorities about my presence in the village. I asked the men to bring him to me, and asked him how much he took to inform on me and Rashid al-'Abd [another fasil leader], he said £P100 I asked him if he was the one who informed about the dynamite in his cousins house which had caused his arrest. He said that it was he, and I asked him if he admitted to more other actions, and he did. So I took my pistol and shot him, so did Rashid al-'Abd"¹¹¹

In this area, the heads of the fasil used to visit villages and set up courts or quick trials, and solve the problems and disputes. The people could go

108 Lt. General Haining to the War Office, 30/11/1938, CO 733/379/75528/74/38.

109 Bashir Ibrahim personal interview 15/7/1984, Zeita, Tulkarm.

110 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

111 Mubadda Farhat, personal interview, 21/3/1985, Majd al-Kurum, Galilee.

to the regional commander for a solution to a problem or a complaint, if they were dissatisfied with the fasa'il leaders judgment.

"The leader Abu-Ibrahim al-Kabir told me and al-'Abd Bishr, "you are responsible for the area from the lake of Tiberia to Majd al-Kurum; you will rove the area and solve any problems and disputes among the people". This was what we did, roving villages and solving problems and disputes, and the people respected us."¹¹²

Because the northern area was geographically far from the Central area, it was far less controlled by the revolt leaders in the center, and from the organisational system or the court system. The leader of the north Khahil Mohammad Issa (Abu Ibrahim al-Kabir), did not join in Deir Ghassaneh Conference, and was not involved in the decision to establish a Central Court of the Bureau of the Arab Revolt, as he had maintained direct contacts with the Central Committee in Damascus. Although cases were similar in the two areas, both in the types of dispute and their resolution, there were some practices in the north which were different from those in the centre. For example, swearing against religion was considered a crime in the north, while in the central area it was not a punishable matter, as the following example shows:

"Abu 'Abdullah and his fasil from the north was visiting the fasil of Beit Imrin [near Nablus] and its fasil leader 'Abdullah al-Taha. One of the rebels from Beit Imrin fasil swore something against religion. So some of the rebels from the fasil from the north took this rebel aside and gave him ten lashes as that was the punishment for swearing against religion. When al-Taha knew about it he became very angry as they don't have the same rules in their area, because the other fasil took it upon themselves to punish the man without referring to his leader and he said "if the man was guilty I would have punished him." And a clash was about to occur for this misunderstanding. But the people of Beit Imrin interfered and the dispute was over".¹¹³

The Southern region was similar to the north in that it was far from the center and more isolated, and the hierarchical system of courts did

112 Ibrahim Hanna, personal interview, 23/1/1985, al-Be'neh, Galilee.

113 'Ali Zayadneh, personal interview, 16/4/1985 Tamra, Galilee

not exist. The heads of fasils were usually the ones to solve the disputes. In the Beersheba area the tribal heads took this responsibility, as some of them were also the heads of their tribes fasils.¹¹⁴

In the central region itself differences could be found between the practice of the different leaders towards courts and trials. 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad as the General Commander of the revolt maintained the system and was careful that each trial was held with witnesses for both sides of the dispute, and the dissatisfied party given the opportunity to appeal. He also made sure that before the death sentence was passed on any person, all the evidence was correct, although he did not often pass the death sentence.

"Once I went with Sheikh Ahmad to a village named Burqa, to meet 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad. When we were there, a leader named Fawzi Jarrar came to him with a traitor in order to set a trial for him. After the hearing in the court which 'Abd al-Rahim made, he told the traitor, 'aren't you ashamed of yourself? your life now is in our hands but I am not going to kill you, I am going to pardon you", he gave him £P17 and olive oil and a sack of flour for his family and let him go. A few days later the same man came back, he had given the oil and flour to his family, and bought a rifle with the money, and asked 'Abd al-Rahim to join the revolt"¹¹⁵.

'Abd al-Raziq also used to set courts and trials in his area, and like 'Abd al-Rahim he tried to keep the system of witnesses and evidence, although in some cases he used to make a judgment without a trial.

"Once the Mukhtar of al-Taybeh saw one of 'Abd al-Raziq's men bring a truck to the village full of furniture; when he asked him about it, he said that orders were issued to confiscate the furniture of a man from Jaffa. The Mukhtar went to 'Abd al-Raziq and told him about it, 'Abd al-Raziq said he did not issue such an order. He brought the rebel and set a court for him, and he punished him with 25 lashes"¹¹⁶.

Abu-Durra ran these courts with much less care. Although he had set up a court in his village, Silat al-Harithya, it consisted of two fasil

114 'Arafat al-Khatib, personal interview, 13/3/1985, al-Shati' Refugee Camp, Gaza. He was the Mukhtar of Qibia village, near Ramleh before 1948.

115 Raji al-Khatib, personal interview, 22/2/1985, Majd al-Kurum, Galilee.

116 Salih Baransi, personal interview, May 1985 London.

leaders and two elderly men from the village, with the assistance of two religious Sheikhs. They solved problems and disputes between the people and set trials for rebels who disobeyed the order or committed crimes, such as rape, and theft. They also set trials for members of the public who committed crimes. Although this court was authorised to pass judgments, Abu Durra himself might defy their judgment. This meant that an authorised court could be limited by the personal view of the leader, and his judgments could not be predicted. ¹¹⁷

"Once Abu-Durra put a man in the revolt prison, as he was told that the man was a collaborator. This man sent him a letter from the prison saying "How could you enslave people, when their mothers had born them free?" Abu Durra ordered his release after the letter. But before the man was able to leave, Abu-Durra asked the Sheikhs in his court about their opinion they said we should fight collaborators. Abu-Durra said, "Kill the man". The man was killed without even setting a trial for him." ¹¹⁸

It is interesting to note that some of the judgments passed during the revolt are still effective now.

"Some people had a dispute about a land, so I went to the village and after looking at the title deeds, I divided the land, between them and made them write documents of this division, and both parties signed it. The land is still divided now, in the same way as I have done it then" ¹¹⁹

117 Fawzi Jaradat, personal interview, 4/2/1985. Silat al-Harithiya, Jenin.

118 Ibid.

119 Bashir Ibrahim, personal interview, 15/7/1984 Zeita, Tulkarm.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Socio-Political Structure of the Revolt

Class Conflict and Class Alliances:

Palestinian society under Ottoman rule was a hierarchical one. A rudimentary class structure separated the Sheikhs of the leading clans (hamuleh) and the district tax collectors from the mass of peasant producers. However, the underlying relations of exploitation by local Sheikhs of the peasantry did not develop into open class antagonism at the local level, as they were mitigated by the benefits that the peasants gained in supporting their leaders against state intervention, and by the mutual struggles against competing clan alliances. Kinship relations and the clan system also served to maintain the appearance of sustaining mutual interests rather than exploitation. The proverb "I and my brother unite to fight my cousin, but I and my cousin unite to fight the stranger", expresses the principle underlying this relationship, especially when interpreted along political lines.

During the nineteenth century, Palestine became increasingly integrated into the capitalist world market, which dramatically transformed its social structure. With the direct intervention of the Ottoman state by the imposition of economic measures and a series of land laws (see Chapter One), the process of transformation involved a major shift in the local balance of forces. The Ottomans broke the power of rural alliances, and shifted control over local administration and tax collection from rural Sheikhs to an emerging class of urban notables. Their political power eroded, many of the local Sheikhs subsequently shifted their base of operations to the towns and merged with the class of urban notables.

The notables took command over much of the agricultural production, as well as seizing political power and control over rural areas. The urban notable families and the emerging commercial bourgeoisie acquired vast properties of land as a result of the Ottoman land laws. Subsequently, many of the peasants were transformed into share-croppers working for the large land owners, local and absentee.¹ (see Chapters One and Two).

The subordination of the local economy to the needs of the World Market subsequently paralleled the subjugation of the peasantry. These transformations were linked - beside the external factors - to the rise of the leading urban classes. The notables who owned large tracts of land engaged in money lending² and tax-collecting, as well as dominating the local administrative functions of the increasingly centralised government. The other class was the emerging commercial bourgeoisie, which was composed chiefly of Palestinians and Lebanese, and to a lesser extent Jews and Europeans, who were representatives of banking and merchant capital, but who also had large land holdings.³

1 Alexander Scholch, "European Penetration". p.24.

2 These loans were with very high interest rates, forty or fifty per cent a year. R. Tamimi, and M. Bahjat; Villayet Beirut. Beirut, 1914, p.105.

3 Alexander Scholch, "European Penetration". p.23.

The new notable patrons used their power and influence to assist their peasant clients in dealing with the state, or in feuds with peasants attached to other patrons. In return, the peasants supported their patrons in their political struggle for power. The relations between notables and peasants appear to have been mutually beneficial. The notable benefited from his relationship with the peasants by their reinforcing of his power in his feuds. He was also their money lender, usurer and tax collector. The peasants on the other hand, benefited from his patronage as he played the role of their protector in their feuds with other peasants, and mediated between them and the government. Thus class antagonism was mitigated by the same factors (mutual interests) which had hindered its development into open class conflict earlier in the nineteenth century.

Subordination of the political economy of Palestine to western capitalism entailed, paradoxically, the reinforcement of pre-capitalist ideologies. While the peasants increasingly worked for capital, they did so under transformed pre-capitalist forms of productive relations and ideologies which were manipulated by the notable urban classes as a means of domination over the countryside for their own interests. The conditions of peripheral capitalism required a much more active ruling class hegemony than had been needed in the pre-capitalist era were becoming increasingly un-applicable in view of the developments which took place in the country, which had affected mostly the peasants.

The Social Structure of the Revolt

Many of the prevailing accounts of Palestine during the Mandate period tend to marginalise the role of the Palestinian peasants in the political struggle. The peasants are described in some of these accounts as "traditional, backward and conservative",⁴ or "too isolated ignorant and

⁴ Musa al-Budeiri, The Palestinian Communist Party. London, 1979, p.47.

poor",⁵ to play a significant role in the national movement. Others describe them as being a "mass which is not homogeneous, and undifferentiated; their different sections have different aims and different perspectives, and each of them is thus confronted with a different set of problems."⁶ Thus, according to these accounts the Palestinian peasants lacked any common political, national or social objectives to bind them together in a coherent movement.

Other accounts have minimised the role of peasants in the national movement by concentrating in their studies of the period (including the revolt of 1936-39), on the role of the elite leadership of the national movement (the notable classes).⁷ These accounts give the impression that during the revolt peasants were merely a military instrument in the hands of the notable classes and the leaders of the national movement, and were unable to formalise an organisational framework through which they could express their own political interests independent of the urban elites.

Although the peasants, who were the vast majority of the rebels, did not have an articulated social and political program during the revolt, they did have common political, national and social objectives which allowed them to form a broad alliance with the workers and with the urban middle class radical elements, as this chapter will discuss. Despite the fact that the peasants had common national, political and economic objectives with the urban notables, they expressed their own interests, albeit in a rudimentary fashion, especially during the period in the revolt when peasant hegemony was imposed over the countryside as well as certain towns.

5 Ann Moseley Lesch, Arab Politics in Palestine. London, 1979, p.17.

6 Tom Bowden, The Breakdown. London, 1977, p.189.

7 Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat; A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History and Robert John and Sami Hadawi, Palestine Diary.

To approach the social structure of the revolt, a list was compiled containing the names, places of origin and areas of operation of the General Commanders, Regional and Sub-Regional Commanders, and the Fasa'il Leaders of the revolt.⁸ Although this list includes the names of those who assumed leading ranks in the revolt, it also approximate the general social structure of the rebel forces.

Of the 196 names in the list 139, the overwhelming majority (71 %) came from villages, 43 (22 %) came from towns, 9 (5 %) were Bedouins, and 5 (2 %) were volunteers from Arab countries. By breaking these numbers into the social background of these leaders, according to their places of origin and the economic background, we find that the great majority of those who originated from villages (129), were still residing in their villages and depending on the land for their livelihood when the revolt started. The remaining 10 of these leaders also originated from villages, but at the time of the revolt were residing in towns and working as labourers, while maintaining their relations with their original villages. Most of the 43 who came from the towns were from the middle classes (for example teachers or ex-Ottoman officers). However, not all of these were involved in military engagements. Fourteen assumed different administrative roles in the revolt, such as advisers or secretaries to the leaders, members of the National Committees, judges in the rebel courts, or arms transporters. The overall picture is therefore of a rebel leadership composed overwhelmingly of peasants and workers with a small minority of middle class urban members.

By looking at the geographical distribution of the rebel leaders, the centres of gravity of the rebel forces can also be seen. Galilee⁹ and the Central area (Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm), were the two major areas of

⁸ See list in Appendix A.

⁹ Galilee is a general term, which geographically includes Acre, Safad, Tiberias, Haifa and Mount Carmel and Nazareth.

concentration of rebel forces. Galilee 82 leaders, Central area 59 leaders respectively. Although these two areas shared with the rest of Palestine the same general reasons to rebel (see Chapter Four), there were additional reasons peculiar to them which explain the high concentration of rebel forces in these areas.

In 1937, the Galilee area - which was an Arab-populated area - was assigned to be included in the new Jewish State, as suggested by the Royal Commission in its partition plan. This was one of the main reasons the Galilee area intensified its involvement in the revolt. Another factor which made Galilee play a significant role in the revolt was the fact that most of al-Qassam's followers, who assumed a leading role during the revolt had either came from the area, or were operating there. Out of the total of 24 leading Qassamites, 18 operated in Galilee (including one from the Gaza area, who was residing in Haifa as a worker, and another from the Ramallah area who was a worker in Haifa). A third factor which affected the role of this area in the revolt was that its proximity to Syria and Lebanon, which made it easier to bring in arms, ammunition, supplies, and send the injured to be treated in these two countries. It also made it easier to maintain direct contact with the Central Committee of the Jihad. A fourth factor affecting Galilee participation in the revolt was the land sales, especially on the Coastal plains and the Nazareth area, which left thousands of peasants landless (see Chapter One). It is significant to note here that the village of Saffuriyah near Nazareth in lower Galilee produced six leaders for the revolt, five of whom were Qassamites. Many interviewees explained that this village produced six leaders because its inhabitants were very religious Muslims. Perhaps, this is to be accounted for by the intensified presence of the Qassamite ideology as a result of the presence of five Qassamite leaders in that village.

The second important center of gravity of the revolt was the triangle area formed by the three towns of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm. During

the revolt this area was known as the "Triangle of terror" by the British Police, troops and Journalists.¹⁰ because of the big battles and clashes which occurred there, and because it was completely controlled by the rebels. The concentration of rebel forces around these towns can be attributed to three main factors. The first was the presence of followers al-Qassam , who were able to mobilise and lead a large number of rebels. Most of these leaders 5 were from Jenin area, and one from Silat al-Zahir. Four of the most prominent leaders of the revolt also came from this region: 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, both from Tulkarm area; Yusif Said Abu-Durra, from Jenin area and Mohammad al-Salih, from Silat al-Dhahir between Jenin and Nablus. The last two leaders were also Qassamites. The presence of these leaders in the Triangle areas affected the role played by these areas in the revolt. The third reason which led to these areas being intensely involved in the revolt was land sales. Thousands of peasants had been evicted from lands in these areas (especially around Jenin and Tulkarm) which were subsequently sold to the Jews. (see details in Chapter One).

There is no single explanation for the representation of the towns in the list. In some cases, the social and political situation in a particular town could partly explain the level of its participation in the revolt in terms of the number of leaders it produced. For example, the heavy presence of rich families in Jaffa which supported the Nashashibi faction could explain why this town did not produce a higher number of leaders, but this does not explain why Tulkarm, which did not have a large number of Nashashibi supporters, did not produce any leaders at all. On the other hand, the volume of land purchase in the area around a certain town did not necessarily explain a town's participation. For example, if we use the volume of land sales as a rule to judge the participation of a town in the revolt, Tulkarm should produce the biggest number of

10 Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done*. p.238.

leaders, or at least it should produce more than Hebron which did not suffer from land sales and produced 5 leaders.

The only explanation we are left with, is that each individual town had its particular reasons which were connected to it, to explain its level of participation in the Revolt. In addition to the general political and National reasons which were behind the revolt and shared by all areas in Palestine.

The Number Of leaders From The Towns

| | | | |
|-----------|----|------------|---|
| Safad | 4 | Hebron | 5 |
| Haifa | 4 | Gaza | 8 |
| Jenin | 2 | Beersheba | 1 |
| Nablus | 9 | Jaffa | 2 |
| Tulkarm | - | Bethlehem | 1 |
| Jerusalem | 6 | Khan Yunis | 1 |
| | | | |
| Total | 43 | | |
| | | | |

Nablus was highly represented, with 9 leaders. This was due to three equally important factors. First, Nablus was a stronghold of Palestinian Arab Nationalism. Second, it was also a stronghold of the Istiqlalists, who were still politically active as individuals after the Istiqlal Party was dissolved. Third, a number of teachers at al-Najah School were involved in the revolt, mainly as advisers. Seven leading participants from Nablus assumed positions as advisers to the leadership of the revolt, one of them being a military adviser, as he was an ex-Ottoman officer, and another a

judge in the Rebel Court. The remaining two were the only ones who participated in the fighting side of the revolt, one as a mine expert, the other (Sheikh Shakib al-Qutub) a sub-regional commander in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was not highly represented (6 leaders) in spite of the fact that it was a center for nationalists and political activists, especially when compared with Nablus. However, unlike Nablus, Jerusalem produced only one adviser to the rebels, the remaining five being on the fighting side of the revolt. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that with the exception of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, who was a General Commander in the Jerusalem area, and the founder of the al-Jihad al-Muqaddas organisation, none of the Jerusalem notable families were involved in the revolt. According to a list of leaders compiled by Y. Porath, 7 members of the Husseini family were involved in the revolt, assuming different leading positions.¹¹ However, four Jerusalemite interviewees (two of whom were Husseinis), did not recall any Husseini in the revolt other than 'Abd al-Qadir. Two other two Husseinis

involved in a leading position in the revolt were from Gaza.¹² It is also important to note that two of the Jerusalem rebel leaders belonged to urban secret organisations, and were not members of al-Jihad al-Muqaddas, nor followers of 'Abd al-Qadir.

Hebron was also well represented with 5 leaders. The only possible explanation for this is the uprising of 1929 in which Hebron was intensely involved, and the clashes which occurred during the uprising between the Arabs and the Police, and the mutual murders between the Arabs and Jews of the town.

11 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. Appendix B. and p.261.

12 Salah al-Din al-Husseini, interview, May 1985, Ain Seniya, Ramalla; Faisal 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, personal interview 21/10/1985, Jerusalem; Bahjat Abu-Gharbiyah, personal interview, 5/5/1985 Amman and 'Abboudeh Ghaith, personal interview, 6/3/1985 Jerusalem.

The town which stands out as the most heavily represented in the leadership of the revolt, compared with the other towns and areas is Gaza with 8 leaders. Possibly this is due to the fact that Gaza, being far from the central area and from the Central Committee in Damascus, was less affected by the hierarchical divisions of the rebel forces found mainly in the Central area, and to a lesser extent in Galilee. Thus, Gaza did not produce a General Commander, Regional or Sub-Regional Commanders, but had many fasils, each of which had a leader. Out of the total of 8 leaders representing Gaza, three were members of the National Committees.

Jaffa was under-represented in the leadership, with only 2 leaders. This was in spite of the high percentage of land sales in that area - a factor which led to intensive participation in the revolt in other areas. Although almost all the General Commanders had fasa'il operating in Jaffa on their behalf, Jaffa itself produced only two who operated as advisers. This under-representation can be explained by the heavy presence of the Nashashibi (anti-revolt) faction.

The bedouin representation in the leadership (9 leaders) came mainly from two areas in Galilee: Shafa 'Amr (5 leaders), and Tiberias (3). These relatively high numbers were due to the heavy Jewish settlement in the two areas, as well as to disputes over grazing rights which became more intense with the Jewish land purchases. The remaining bedouin was from the Hebron area.

Although the Druze especially these of Upper Galilee, participated in the revolt, they have produced only one fasil leader. Porath states that the Druze did not join the revolt and had a reserved attitude towards it, which, according to him, was gradually transformed into hostility and the conviction that the Druze communal interests would be better served by close co-operation with the Jews. ¹³

13 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. pp. 271-
2

The views of the interviewees for this research were completely different from those presented by Porath. Despite the fact that the Druze produced only one *fasil* leader (the *fasil* was composed of Druze as well as Muslims and Christians), the number of Druze who participated in the revolt as full-time fighters, or as *Faz'a*, was in proportion to their percentage of the population (in 1935 the Druze numbered 11,311 and formed 0.87% of the Palestine population.¹⁴) There were participants from all the villages which had a Druze population in Upper Galilee, such as Yarka, Abu-Snan, Beit-Jan, and Rameh, as well as from lower Galilee villages such as Shafa 'Amr and the villages of Mount Carmel.¹⁵ The Druze also joined the *faz'a* during battles.

It is important to mention that, while the Druze of Upper Galilee continued to support and participate in the revolt, those in Lower Galilee stopped their support and participation in the revolt in 1938 after the death of Sheikh 'Atiyah whose leadership had extended from Jenin to Haifa, and whose brigades had included Druze from Lower Galilee. After Abu-Durra assumed the command of the same area, the Druze of these villages decided to operate independently from his Command (as a result of Abu-Durra's killing of some Druze whom he was told by informers were collaborators). Abu-Durra responded to this decision by attacking some of the Druze villages, a result of which the Druze of Lower Galilee ceased their support for the revolt.¹⁶ Salih Khunaifis, a

14 Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1944-1945, Jerusalem, English edn. 1946, p.17

15 Most of the interviewees of Upper Galilee confirmed this fact, as well as those in Jenin area, who operated under the command of Sheikh 'Atyah, who had many Druze in his brigades. Personal interviews:

Mustafa al-Bakri, 20/2/1985, al-Be'neh, Galilee

'Ali Omar Zayadnah, 16/4/1985, Tamra, Galilee

Bulus Hanna Bulus, 20/3/1985, al-Be'neh, Galilee

Raji al-Khatib, 22/3/1985, Majd al-Kurum, Galilee

Ibrahim Hanna, 23/11/1985, al-Be'neh, Galilee

Fawzi Jaradat, 4/2/1985, Silat al-Harithya, Jenin

Ahmad Nazal, 1/4/1984, Qabatiya, Jenin.

16 Salim 'Abd al-Haqq Jaradat; Personal interview 20/5/1984, Silat al-Harithiya, Jenin.

Druze Sheikh from Shafa 'Amr, refused to give an interview for this research saying that:

"Abu-Durra came and started to kill Druze Sheikhs, so we started to work with the British. And that is why I refuse to give an interview"¹⁷

Christian Arabs were under-represented in the leadership, especially in the Central and Southern areas of the country. Only three leaders were Christians: two from Upper Galilee, and one from the Jerusalem area. This can be attributed to the fact that the Christian population in general were economically better off than the Muslims. Moreover, the majority of them lived in towns, and thus were less effected by the consequences of land sales, and less involved in the revolt operations which were concentrated in the rural areas.

From the above analysis of the social, economic and geographical background of the 196 General Commanders, Regional and Sub-Regional Commanders, and Fasa'il Leaders, the following important results can be drawn. First, the overwhelming majority of those who participated in the revolt were peasants. Second, although notable families participated politically, especially in the parties, they did not join in the fighting side of the revolt. Third, members of all three religious groups participated in the revolt, although the Muslims were by far the biggest majority, as is to be expected since Muslims represented 87% of the Arab population of Palestine.¹⁸ Fourth, the towns which had most political and nationalist activities, namely Nablus and Jerusalem, had more members participating in the revolt than towns which were not centers for such activities. Fifth, the areas which participated intensively in the revolt, were not only those which were directly threatened economically and politically by the Jewish national home, as were the

17 Salih Khunaifis, March 1985, Shefa 'Amr, Lower Galilee.

18 Palestine Department of Statistics; Statistical Abstract 1944-1945, Jerusalem, 1945. p.17

Galilee and Central areas, but also areas such as Gaza and Hebron which joined the revolt for national reasons.

Two main conclusions could be drawn from the above points: first, that the revolt was carried out mainly by the Muslim peasant majority of the population who also had the lowest economic status; second, that in addition to the economic objectives of the revolt, there were also political, national and social objectives, which drew all areas of Palestine into participating in the revolt.

Forms of Alliances:

Networks of alliances were formed during the revolt on several different levels which were affected by many factors. Thus the web of relations between peasants, workers, the middle class urbanites, the notable urban classes, bedouins, and clans was a much more complicated and tangled structure than the simplistic description of Bowden acknowledges:

"Structurally, strategically and tactically, the guerrillas revealed themselves as peasant units each operating after its own lights in its own field - that area of territory within which it had won or coerced authority and allegiance"¹⁹

There were many inter-related factors social, national, religious and territorial which affected the formation of each alliance. The alliances themselves were formed on different levels: alliances on class bases, such as the ones which comprised primarily peasants and workers; alliances which were based on clan relations; and alliances between notables and peasants.

A - Peasant Worker Alliances:

As a result of Jewish purchase of agricultural land, many thousands of Arab peasants became landless (see Chapter One), and most sought jobs as unskilled labourers in the towns, in particular the two ports of Jaffa and Haifa, and in commercial centers. Many others had to maintain their livelihood and to supplement their agricultural income by finding off-farm work, as short term, or seasonal day labourers, so as not to lose their base on the land.²⁰ These were not "pure" peasants in the economic structure for they assumed a dual economic role as peasants and as casual workers.

These two groups, the peasant workers who travelled to towns to work and the casual workers, were affected socially and politically by entering the wage labour market, and this in turn affected and developed their forms of mobilisation and the forms of their alliances. When these migrant peasants lost their lands they also lost their immediate social base as they left their villages, as well as the protection provided to them by their clan alliances. In the towns they needed other allies, in a different form of alliance which was not clan based. Their fellow workers, the town proletariat were possible allies who shared the same social conditions with them and who also suffered from the Zionist Settler Colonisation (see Chapter One). Thus both the migrant peasant-workers, and the towns workers shared the same national, social and political interests.

The other important factor which affected peasant-workers' forms of mobilisation and alliances was that in the towns they were exposed to different and more advanced forms of social and political mobilisation, and new ideologies. They began to join organisations, associations and workers unions which were based on a broader and more developed

20 Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy". p.114.

framework than the old pre-capitalist forms of clan-familial relations or patron-client relations, which they experienced when they were in their villages. Organisations or movements based on religious-nationalist ideologies, such as al-Qassam's movement recruited them in large numbers, and they joined the struggle alongside the town workers also recruited by his movement. They were also exposed to political-nationalist ideologies adopted by associations such as the Young Muslim Men's Association, and The Arab Youth Congress. In addition, many joined the Arab Workers Union, which was also a nationalist movement.²¹ These ideologies and forms of political mobilisation to which the peasant-workers were introduced created for them alternative forms of alliance, based on political and national ideologies, rather than the old forms of alliances which they had in their villages, which were based on clan and familial relations.

The alliance between migrant peasant-workers and town workers was not only based on national and political ideologies, but also on mutual class interests. One can detect a class connotation in some of the orders issued by the rebels during the revolt, especially those issued during the months from August to December 1938, when the rebels had control over the countryside and most of the towns. In these orders the rebels clearly identified themselves with the lower classes of the town, the workers, as well as the needs of the peasants in the countryside. One such order was the moratorium on debts, which was to take effect starting from September 1st, 1938, and according to the order, should continue

21 The Arab Workers Association was formed in 1925 in Haifa, and had succeeded in establishing 19 branches in various areas of Palestine. Its main aims were to mobilise the Arab workers to defend their interests and to protect them. In its program it stated that all of its activities would be within the law, and would not involve political or religious matters. However, the main force within this Association were the nationalists. The Association succeeded to mobilise a substantial number of workers within its ranks. Ghassan Kanafani, "Thawrat 1936-39", *Shu'un Filastinya*, vol 6/7 No. 6. p.49

indefinitely.²² This order was obviously to the benefit of the urban lower classes, and against the interest of the wealthier classes.

The other order was issued by 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, in which he banned creditors from collecting their debts from the villages.²³

Another order, in which the rebels also had clearly identified themselves with urban lower classes as well as urban workers, was the order canceling rents on flats.²⁴

B - Clan Alliances

Clan relations and their networks of alliances in the Palestinian social structure had been weakened by the abolition of the Musha'a System, the integration of the Palestinian economy within the capitalist world market, and the emergence of new urban classes which dominated the economic, social and political life in Palestine during the last few decades of the nineteenth century. However in spite of these dramatic transformations within the Palestinian society, clan kinship relations and networks of alliances remained significant.

This was due to several factors which, combined together, led the clan system to remain as one of the most powerful forms of social mobilisation during the British Mandate period in Palestine. The first factor, was that the urban notable class, along with the commercial bourgeoisie which started to emerge in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, sought to dominate the countryside for their own interests. To do so, they had to reinforce pre-capitalist ideologies, using among other tools, clan kinship relations. This process was strengthened

22 A translated copy from Arabic, signed by The Mujahid for the Sake of God and the Holy Fatherland, Saad al-Din al-Bashir. CO 733/372/75156

23 A translated copy from Arabic, signed The Public Leader of the Arab Rebels in Palestine, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad. CO. 733/372/156396

24 Y. Porath, The Palestinian Arab National Movement. p.268

with the merging of some of the rural Sheikhs - whose power was eroded by the shift of the political, social and economic power to the urban areas - with these urban classes, while at the same time they maintained their links with their clans through patron-client relationships, and who used clan alliances to provide support for the urban notables in their struggle for political power.

On the other hand, the new urban notable class had reinforced family relations and clan alliances by using them in their struggles for political power in competition with other families and alliances. For example, when some of the richer members of the 'Abd al-Hadi family from the Jenin area moved to the towns of Nablus and Jenin, they maintained their connections with the rest of their clan in their original village of Arrabeh, who supported them, for example, in municipal elections.

The third factor which played a significant role in helping the Clan System to continue was the Zionist Settler colonialism, which - through the process of building the Jewish National home and the its impact on the social, political and economic life - delayed the development of Palestinian Arab society's towards capitalist relations and the creation of new social structures. The clan system was vitally important in the mobilisation of fighting against the Zionist colonial threat, and this also reinforced it.

The clan system, kinship relations and clan alliances were used during the revolt by most of the rebel leaders, those who were residing in their villages, and those who were working outside their villages and returned back during the revolt. The clans also used their members who became leaders for their own interests. This mutual interest enabled the leader to mobilise a large number of rebels through his clan and its alliances, and to use the clan territories for his battles against the British forces, which gave him the advantage of constant supplies, Faz'a, protection. In addition, he would be fighting in territories familiar to him and to his

men. The clan for its part, used the member leader and his forces to strengthen its social position, to gain prestige and to strengthen its stand against rival clans and alliances.

The case of Abu-Durra is a classic example of the relation between a leader and his clan. Socially and economically Yusuf Said Abu-Durra was considered to be from the lowest stratum within his clan, the Jaradat of Silat al-Harithiyah village. He worked in Haifa as a workers foreman in the railway, during which time, he joined the al-Qassam movement as a messenger.²⁵ During the revolt he joined the forces of sheikh 'Atiyah, who was operating in the area between Jenin and Haifa, and after the death of sheik 'Atiyah, Abu-Durra assumed command of the area.²⁶ Although many members of his clan did not agree with his actions during the period of his command, such as the killing of some village Mukhtars or some Druze²⁷ and in spite the fact that they considered him to be of lowly social position in his clan, they nevertheless supported him. Many members joined his forces, and the clan continued to support him in spite of the continuous curfews, searches and cordons conducted by the British forces against the village.²⁸

In the Tulkarm area, the competition between the Samara family and the Haj Ibrahim family over social and political power reflected itself, among other ways in the two prominent leaders who came from these two families, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad who came from the former, and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq who came from the latter. As a result of this the Tulkarm area was divided between the two leaders, 'Abd al-

25 Arabi Badawi, personal interview, 23/5/1984, Qabalan, Nablus

26 Ahmad Nazal, personal interview, 1/4/1984 Qabatiyah, Jenin. According to him, he was offered the leadership of the area after the death of sheikh 'Atiyah by the Central Committee in Damascus and he declined to accept, and named Abu-Durra to take the command.

27 Fawzi Jaradat, personal interview, 4/2/1985 Silat al-Harithiyah, Jenin and Salim 'Abd al-Haqq Jaradat, personal interview 20/5/1984. Silat al-Harithiyah, Jenin.

28 Fawzi Jaradat.

Rahim operating in the Wad al-Sha'ir area (to the east of Tulkarm), which was closer to his village Dhinnabah ²⁹, and 'Arif operating in the area of Bani Sa'b (to the south of Tulkarm) near his village of al-Taybah.³⁰ When the Bureau of the Arab Revolt in Palestine was formed in the Summer of 1938, it was agreed by the leaders that the position of the Head of the Bureau should rotate between the members. Nevertheless, the only two who actually competed for the position were 'Abd al-Rahim and 'Arif. (more details on the relation between the two leaders are provided in Chapter Eight).

However, the two biggest rival clan alliances which affected the political life in Palestine, and affected all other alliances, were those of the al-Husseini family and its rival the Nashashibi family (more details are provided in Chapter Two). The rivalry between these two big alliances was not confined to the of Jerusalem area only, but also influenced more distant parts of the country through a network of complicated and entangled relations and alliances which were not necessarily directly connected with these two Jerusalem families. For example, in Maythaloun, a small village near Jenin, each of the two clans of the village supported a big and powerful family in the area of Jenin. The Rabaya'h clan in Maythaloun supported the 'Abd al-Hadi family, while the other clan in the village al-Nua'irat supported the Jarrar family, another equally rich and powerful family in the Jenin area.³¹ Both the 'Abd al-Hadi and Jarrar families owned lands in Maythaloun. 'Abd al-Hadi generally supported the Nashashibi faction, which in turn had made a sub-alliance with al-Rabaya'h in Maythaloun. On the other hand Jarrar supported the al-Husseini faction, which subsequently made a sub-

29 Shakier Milhim, Personal interview 6/4/1985 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

30 Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, Personal interviews 2/2/1985 and 20/4/1985. al-Taybah, Triangle.

31 Hasan al-Haj Yusif (of al-Rabaya'h Clan) Personal interview, 3/4/1984, Maythaloun, Jenin.

alliance with al-Nua'irat.³²

Some families adopted a position against some leaders for personal rather than political reasons. The al-Dajani family of Jerusalem were against 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq of al-Taybah, whom they accused of killing Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani who was visiting 'Arif the day he was killed.³³ The Irshid family in the Jenin area were against 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, whom they accused of ordering his men to kill Ahmad and Mohammad Irshid because the Irshid family were pro-Nashashibi. After the killing of the Irshid brothers, this rich land owning family formed an alliance with the 'Abd al-Hadi family, and both families collaborated together in 1939 to form anti-revolt peace bands.³⁴ It is common knowledge in the Jenin area that Farid Irshid was the person who informed the British authorities of the presence of 'Abd al-Rahim in Sanur village which led to his being killed during a clash with them.³⁵ The al-Abboushi family in Jenin were against Abu-Durra, as they accused him of killing Rashad al-Ahmad, a relative of the family, and when Abu-Durra was arrested in 1939, the al-Abboushi family testified against him at the Court, which led to his hanging.³⁶

C - Patron-Client Alliance

The rebels generally accepted the political position of the national leadership (which was composed mainly of the notable urban classes).

32 Adham Mahmoud Jarrar, personal interview, 2/6/1984, Sanur, Jenin.

33 Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq. personal interviews, 2/2/1985, and 20/4/1985 al-Taybah, Triangle

34 Hussein Badawi, personal interview, 8/4/1985 Aqqaba, Jenin and Ibrahim Shehadeh, personal interview 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin.

35 Ibid. and Adham Mahmoud Jarrar, personal interview, 2/6/1984, Sanur, Jenin; Kamal Yassin, personal interview 23/7/1984, Tulkarm and Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985, Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

36 Wife of Fahmi al-'Abboushi, personal interview, 27/10/1985, Jenin.

This acceptance was expressed in rebel communiqués as well as in their military operations. This acceptance however, does not reflect the rebels inability to articulate a political position of their own, as Y. Porath suggests.³⁷ It rather reflects the fact that both the rebels and the notable national leadership shared the same political and national goals.

The notable urban class, and the emerging commercial bourgeoisie, perceived the Jewish urban economic advances as a threat to their own interests, economic as well as political. It was therefore in their interest to join the peasants and urban workers, who were also threatened by the Jewish national home, in a broad alliance against their mutual enemy. This alliance provided the rebels with most of their finances, supplies, arms and ammunition, as the national leadership embodied in the Central Committee for the Jihad in Lebanon and Damascus supplied the rebels with their needs. On the other hand, this alliance gave the national leadership strong armed allies who were, in many cases, used by the leadership against the rival alliances of the opposing factions. For example, it is a widely known fact that during the revolt, the Husseini faction used some of the rebel leaders and other rebels of lower ranks to execute assassinations against their traditional rivals. Shakir Milhim who was a personal assistant to 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, recalls an incident, when a letter was brought to 'Abd al-Rahim by a member of the Husseini faction. The letter contained a list of names whom the writer of the letter wished to be assassinated by 'Abd al-Rahim. All the names in the list were rivals of the al-Husseini faction. ³⁸ When 'Abd al-Rahim read the list he told the messenger to tell them in Damascus that he did not carry out assassinations, and that he was fighting for Palestine and not for the Husseinis.³⁹

37 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p. 265.

38 The letter contained only the list, and did not have any signature. Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

39 Ibid.

not carry out assassinations, and that he was fighting for Palestine and not for the Husseinis.³⁹

The messenger threatened 'Abd al-Rahim that his supplies and financial aid would be cut off should he fail to carry out the assassinations. According to his personal assistant Shakir Milhim and his son, the supplies were indeed cut off from Damascus for a while, and he had to ask the Chamber of Commerce of Jerusalem and the municipality of Ramallah for financial aid.⁴⁰

'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq did not have the same attitude as 'Abd al-Rahim towards political assassinations. He was accused by the al-Dajani family of Jerusalem of being responsible for the assassination of Hasan al-Dajani, a prominent political figure who was killed in 'Arif's territory of Command. Faisal, 'Arif's son, denies his father's responsibility for killing Hasan al-Dajani, and says that the murder was carried out by one of his father's bodyguards without his knowledge.⁴¹ However, the fact that Hasan al-Dajani was killed in 'Arif territory immediately after he visited him, and the fact that during Hasan's visit to 'Arif, the latter was visited by two of the Husseinis faction, indicate that if 'Arif did not order the assassination to be carried out, at least he knew of it, especially since one of the two visitors from the Husseinis faction was Dawood al-Husseini, the same person who brought the list of names for assassination to 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad.⁴²

39 Ibid.

40 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985, Dinnabah, Tulkarm and Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, personal interview, 9/4/1985, Tulkarm.

41 Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq. Personal interviews, 2/2/1985, and 20/4/1985, al-Taybah, Triangle.

42 Shakir Milhim, personal interview 6/4/1985, Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

Political Position and Social Conflict

In spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the rebels were peasants from the lower economic and social strata and a considerable number of workers, nonetheless, when they were at the peak of their power in the summer of 1938, and had control over most of the country, the rebels did not attempt to make any changes in the social structure. According to the arguments of some scholars, this is to be attributed to the inability of the rebels to articulate their own ideology.⁴³

However, the rebels' dependency on the existing social structure in their revolt, for example family-clan relations and alliances, provided them with constant supplies, men and protection. On the other hand the rebels also depended on the pre-capitalist pattern of Patron-Client relation with the notable classes who were leading the national movement. This provided them with finance, arms and ammunition and political direction, especially that of the Central Committee of Jihad in Damascus. Within this framework of relations and alliances, class conflict was undermined and peripheralised and social change was not perceived as a priority. In addition to this, the revolt was overwhelmingly perceived as a national and political struggle against the common enemy - the British mandate and the Zionist colonisation - and not against the internal social inequalities or injustices of Palestinian society.

The relationship between the urban notable classes and the peasants did not have a single distinctive pattern, but combined mutual interests, with some class connotations.

Despite these factors, there were some elements in the revolt which indicated social differences, and manifested the peasant character of the revolt, especially during the Summer of 1938, when the rebels gained

43 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.265.

control over the countryside and most of the towns. The peasant hegemony manifested itself in some of the orders issued during that period, as well as by the rebels' occupation of some towns as a display of their strength and control. Although some of the orders were issued for practical purposes, such as ordering the townspeople to wear the peasant Kufiyyah and Iqal instead of the Turkish Tarbush (Fez), so as not to allow the British to distinguish between the peasants and the townsfolk.⁴⁴ This order also had social implications, and displayed peasant hegemony. Other orders which deal with economic issues such as preventing the creditors from collecting their debts (see earlier in this chapter), also have social implications, and class connotations.

The social character of the revolt is described by the rebels themselves in simple terms such as rich and poor:

"Those rich people were not going straight, and we never considered them or took their opinions. They were collaborators, and did not want the revolt. No one from 'Abd al-Hadi family gave money to the revolt. The peasants were the ones who made the revolt."⁴⁵

"Those big families hated the rebels, because they say this rebel was working as a shepherd or as a ploughman for us, and now he comes to our house and sits on our furniture. They used to work for us and now they became important."⁴⁶

However, the situation was best described by Sir Harold MacMichael, the High Commissioner in Palestine, in a letter to the Colonial Office on 2/1/1939:

"Something like a social revolution on a small scale is beginning. The influence of the landlord-politician is on the wane. He has nothing but talk (and pay), others have taken risks, and those others are disposed to take a line of their own."⁴⁷

44 Subhi Yassin, *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. pp.47-48.

45 Ahmad Nazal, personal interview, 1/4/1984 Qabatiyah, Jenin.

46 Ibrahim Qasim. personal interview. 21/1/1985, Musmus, Um al-Fahm.

47 As quoted in Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.269.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The End of the Revolt

Political Atmosphere

As the crisis in Europe was deepening and events moved towards the Second War, the British Governments both in Palestine and in London became more anxious to end the revolt. The British needed to come to an understanding with the Palestinian Arabs which would enable Britain to transfer the large tactical forces being deployed from Palestine to areas directly threatened by Germany, Italy and Japan. It also needed to calm down Muslim opinion alongside the strategic route of oil, men, and supplies which ran from Suez to the Far East. ¹

In addition to the use of the military force, the British sought other policies to crush the revolt namely the use of political and diplomatic maneuvers. In November 1938, the Palestine Partition Commission (the

¹ Robert John & Sami Hadawi, *Palestine Diary*. p.292

Woodhead Commission) which had been sent to Palestine to study the practicality of the partition suggested by the Peel Report, reported that the partition was impractical. ² When the Colonial Secretary announced the results of the Commission to the Cabinet in October (before its publication), he said that:

"The practical question was how we should stage the change of policy involved. It must not appear that we were doing so as a result of the degree of success attained by the rebels." ³

This meant stepping up the military operations against the rebels. From the beginning of November permission to travel had to be obtained from the army.⁴ The demolition of houses was increased. The end of the "Munich Crisis" had allowed military reinforcements to be brought to Palestine. By November there were seventeen battalions of infantry in Palestine, one tenth of the whole regular army. ⁵

The Woodhead Report was published along with the Government Statement of Policy, in which the Government decided to abandon the partition plan suggested by the Peel Commission and to continue with the Mandate as it was. The Government also announced that it make an effort at arrive to a solution between Arabs and Jews by holding a conference of their leaders with representatives also of some independent Arab States. ⁶ Should the Conference fail to bring an agreement, warned MacDonal, the Government would impose its own policy. ⁷

2 Command paper No. 5893, p.3

3 19 October 1938. CO 23/96/49(38)10

4 "Despatch on operations carried out by the British forces in Palestine and Trans-Jordan 1 November 1938, 31 March 1939" p.13. CO 733/404/75528

5. "Narrative despatches from the High Commissioner to the Secretary of State for the Colonies reporting on the Situation in Palestine". vol. 1. No 11 3 December 1938. CO 935/21

6 Palestine Partition Commission Report Cmd. 5854 October 1938.

7 Cmd. No. 5893, p.4

The Conference started in London on 7 February 1939, and broke down in the middle of March, as the meeting parties failed to come to an agreement. ⁸ With the situation in Europe deteriorating rapidly, especially after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Germans, the British could not afford more unrest in the Middle East. On May 1939 the Government issued a White Paper on the situation of Palestine. Palestine would become independent in ten years, but would still be tied by treaty to Britain, and neither Arabs nor Jews would dominate the government. Jewish immigration would be restricted to 75,000 per year for the next five years, after which no further immigration would be permitted without Arab consent. There would be also restrictions on the sale of Arab lands to Jews. ⁹

Arab Reaction to the White Paper

Apart from Prince 'Abdullah of Trans-Jordan and the Defence party, the Arab Higher Committee rejected the White Paper, and issued a statement in which it welcomed the British recognition of the rights of the Arabs in principle, but regretted the British failure to grant Palestinian independence. ¹⁰ In spite of the Higher Arab Committee's rejection of the White Paper, many of its members did actually agree to what was stated in it. ¹¹ This difference of opinion among these political groups, or those who believed in the same political principles, came to reflect the different interpretations of the general political atmosphere and the terms of the White Paper. The rejectionists, among whom the Mufti stood out with strong refusal, based their reaction on the fact that the White Paper did not meet with their national demands.¹² Those who

8 CAB 23/97/1-3, 6-11, and 14

9 The text of the White Paper. Cmd paper No 6019

10 Akram Zueiter, *Watha'iq al-Haraka*. pp.648-653.

11 Bayan al-Hout, *al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat*. p.397

12 Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.596.

agreed on the White Paper (some of whom did sign the rejection statement of the Higher Arab Committee), based their opinion on more realistic policy, and believed that the people of Palestine had become tired of the situation and wanted a solution. This opinion is expressed clearly in the letter sent by 'Ajaj Nuwaihid to 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi in which he says:

"... it is very difficult and I don't like to say it is impossible to make people endure taking a practical position towards the white paper ... if you asked the Arab individual today, no matter what he thinks of the White Paper, he knows its short comings, but when he talks with his feelings he would say when is the salvation coming?... Even if you tell him that the other situation [accepting the White Paper] would not give your country any political benefit, he would say, that at least secures his life, his property and rids him of the government pressure."¹³

The Arab States representatives also agreed to the White Paper in spite of the fact that they had declared their rejection with the exception of the prince of Trans-Jordan who agreed to it publicly.¹⁴ Among the rebels, the reaction was of mixed feelings. On the one hand they felt that the White Paper was a sort of concession by the government towards recognizing the rights of the Palestinians, which they believed the Government would not have done if it were not for the revolt. On the other hand there was a feeling of disappointment that the demands they had been fighting for almost three years and a half were not met. Also as, the White Paper did not offer the rebels amnesty once the revolt stopped.

Factors that Ended the Revolt

By 1939 the Arab revolt in Palestine was showing signs of weakening and when the Second World War broke out the revolt had almost stopped.

13 Bayan al-Hout al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. p.398
14 Ibid. p.396

Many of the prevailing accounts of the revolt attributed its failure to continue and to achieve the national goals to internal factors, such as the backwardness and fragmentation of the peasantry who led the revolt, or to the Palestinian Arab social structure. In his analysis of the revolt Arnon Ohanna states: ¹⁵

"The absence of co-operation and mutual responsibility the deep-seated divisiveness of a society based on patriarchal lines and hamulas, the incident inter-village and inter-hamula wrangles over stretches of land and water sources, over blood feuds, family honour and marital problems ... these were simply transferred to the guerrilla bands/movement."

According to the analysis of Y. Porath, the failure of the rebels to overcome the family and regional loyalties, and the fact that the rebels "put their personal interests first, and those of the population at large, last",¹⁶ caused the revolt to fail. According to other sources, the only force which could have achieved victory for the revolt was a revolutionary party.¹⁷

However, there were other major factors which contributed greatly to bringing the revolt to an end, and prevented it therefore from achieving its national goals. The British military and police forces used harsh and brutal methods to crush the revolt, aided by Jewish armed auxiliary forces. There was a shortage of arms and ammunition for the rebels especially towards the end of the revolt. There were counter attacks and operations by the peace armed bands formed by the opposition faction. The death or arrest of many of the rebel leaders had created a vacuum on the leadership level. All these factors, combined with conflicts within the ranks of the rebels, the poor organisational

15 Arnon Ohanna, Yuval; "The Bands in the Palestinian Arab Revolt 1936-1939: Structure and organisation.", Asian and African Studies. No. 15, 1981 229-47. p.47.

16 Y. Porath; The Palestinian Arab National Movement. p.269

17 Ibid, p.269; A.W. Kayyali, Palestine, A Modern History. p. 231, and Musa al-Budiri, The Palestine Communist Party. p.107

standards, as well as the excesses of some of the rebels, worked against the furthering of the revolt.

The British Military Efforts to End The Revolt

The British Governments both in London and in Palestine were anxious to stop the revolt from its very beginning, for fear that it might spread from Palestine to effect the Arab and Muslim worlds in general, and from concern for the prestige and authority of the British government in the East, had they failed to stop the "disturbances". Air Vice Marshal Richard Pierce had urged that an early display of force would prevent the trouble from spreading. ¹⁸ On the 22nd of September 1936 British military reinforcements were brought into the Country and by the end of the month the number of British troops in the country had risen to 20,000.¹⁹ Pierce and Roy Spicer the Inspector-General of Police, who were in favour of using force to stop the revolt started a search program in the villages whence attacks suspected to come to find arms and rebels and to intimidate the villagers from supporting the rebels. ²⁰ On the 12th of June 1936 the British High Commissioner in Palestine gave the army powers to arrest, search and to impose collective punishments in villages suspected of supporting the rebels. As Mohammad al-Shuraidi recalled.

"After any clash, the English forces would come the next day, and ask the village head to gather the women in the Mosque and the men in the village square. Each one of us should leave his house open. They would make searches. They mixed the olive oil with the salt, with the flour. They killed some of our cattle and demolished houses. This happened with us in 1936. They used to steal gold and the good furniture, I remember that the olive oil made a canal

18 "Abridged despatch by Air Vice Marshal Pierce on the disturbances in Palestine 19 April-14 September 1936", Air 5/12/44 p.17

19 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, Palestine Diary. p.265.

20 Abridged despatch on the disturbances in Palestine, Air 1244. p.25.

that reached the village well. They demolished three houses in that year"²¹

In September 1936 Lieutenant-General Sir John Dill assumed command of the British forces from Pierce. He, however, did not succeed in crushing the revolt. After the Arab Higher Committee agreed to call the strike off and called for the rebels to stop the violence, Lieutenant-General Dill noted that there was no peace in Palestine, only an "armed truce"²² as he was unable to disarm the rebels and his searches in the villages to surrender their arms were unsuccessful.

In 1937 the British were preparing to take more severe methods against the rebels should the revolt resume, as Ormsby-Gore the Colonial Secretary told the Cabinet:

"If and when trouble came, it was necessary to take the most drastic action from the first possible moment."²³

This is what the Government in Palestine and the army did. In May 1937 the High Commissioner agreed to the imprisonment of 200 nationalists in Galilee as a measure to restore order in the area.²⁴ The government also began a campaign against the nationalists in other areas. In October 1937 the Arab Higher Committee and the National Committees were declared 'unlawful associations' and the Mufti was deprived of his post as a President of the Supreme Muslim Council. The members of the Higher Arab Committee and the National Committees along with other 200 activist were arrested and deported to the Seychelles. The Mufti escaped arrest by hiding in al-Haram al-Sharif (the Dome of the Rock) and later he was able to escape to Lebanon.²⁵

In October, officials from the Colonial Office, Air Ministry and War Offices agreed to establish in Palestine Military Courts and to impose the

21 Mohammad al-Shuraidi, personal interview, 21/1/1985. Um al-Fahm

22 Report by Dill on events in Palestine 15 September 1936, p.13. WO 32/9401

23 13 January 1937. CAB 23/87/1(37)

24 Wauchope to Parkinson 20 May 1937. CO 733/332/11

25 Battershill to Ormsby-Gore 14 Oct.1937. CO 733/332/10

death penalty for carrying arms.²⁶ In December 1937 Charles Taggart was appointed as Police Inspector-General, being brought to Palestine for his experience in guerrilla warfare in Bengal. He suggested the occupation of Arab villages for prolonged periods to prevent the rebels from using them as bases or getting aid from them, as well as to protect those who gave information to the security forces.²⁷ The same method was adopted by General Haining in 1938. As Fawzi Jaradat recalled.²⁸

"The English used to come and make a cordon around the village. Around thirty thousand soldiers would come. They would say the men should go to the house of Mohammad al-Hamid, his house was big, and the women should go to the mosque. They would bring a man with them sitting in the tank [armoured vehicle], he was able to see us, we were not able to see him. He would point out at a number of men, and they would arrest them. Last time they came they started to arrest the village headmen. My Uncle was arrested, and when he was released he found his house demolished. Also the headman from the lower part of the village Sharif al-Hussein was also arrested. They wanted to know where Abu-Durra was"²⁹

In 1938 the military used other punitive measures against the population, such as mass arrests, long curfews, extensive demolition of homes, collective fines and sometimes humiliation.

"Once I saw an incident with my own eyes. They [the British], stopped a convoy of cars, and forced the Arab passengers to get out. They took them to the Jewish agricultural settlement of al-Shajara. The streets of this settlement were not paved. The British soldiers forced the Arab men to collect stones and clean the streets of the settlements. They forced them to collect the stones in their own Fezzes and the Jews were watching them, the idea was to humiliate these Arab men on one hand and to instigate national antagonism between the Arabs and Jews. The British also used to force Arab men to clean their army camps."³⁰

26 Minutes of Colonial Office Conference 29 October 1937. FO 371/20818

27 Meeting between Taggart, Petrie and Wauchope 17 December 1937. CO 733/332/12

28 General Haining's Report to War Secretary; Report on the operations carried out by the British forces in Palestine and Trans-Jordan, from 1st April to 18th May 1938, 4th July 1938. CO 733/379

29 Fawzi Jaradat, personal interview 4/2/1985, Silat al-Harithiya, Jenin.

30 Saliba Khamis, personal interview, 19/2/1985 Haifa

The Military Courts inflicted severe punishments including many life sentences.³¹ The number of Arabs who were hanged during the years 1937-1939 for possessing arms, and using them, or joining action with the rebels exceeded 100.³² In 1938, the Military Courts tried 526 persons of which 454 were Arabs and only 73 Jews, and passed 55 death sentences, all were Arabs. The number of persons kept in detention was 5,933 of whom 254 were Jews the remainder being Arabs. ³³

To stop the rebels from sabotaging and attacking trains and military vehicles, the British forces would order relatives of fasil commanders, or some notables to sit on the inspection trolley which drove at the front of the military vehicle. ³⁴

"during the revolt the English used to gather people from Coffee Shops or streets and make them sit on the front of the first vehicle of the military convoy, so if there was a mine on the road it would explode killing the Arabs, or if the rebels attacked these people would be the first to get killed. The people used to sing in loud voices to warn the rebels of the approaching convoy, and to let them know that Arabs have been used as a bait, so as not to shoot at them" ³⁵

Edward Keith-Roach the District Commissioner of the Jerusalem area wrote that the army regarded the Arabs as "an enemy to be exterminated by whatever means in their power".³⁶ Home demolition for example was one of the favoured practices by the army, in this period nearly 2,000 homes were blown-up³⁷ By November 1938, there were seventeen battalions of infantry in Palestine, one-tenth of the whole regular army.³⁸

31 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, p.239

32 Subhi Yassin listed names of some of those who were hanged. In *al-Thawra al-Arabiya*. pp.35-6, 55, 139 and 210.

33 *Survey of Palestine 1945-6* vol. 1 p.49

34 On 14 September 1938, a bus filled with Arabs, commanded by the army ran over a mine killing 10 of the Arabs. "Narrative despatches" No 10, 24 October 1938. CO 935/21

35 Saliba Khamis, personal interview 19/2/1985 Haifa.

36 Keith Roach *Private Papers*, St. Anthony's College, Oxford, Middle East Centre (MEC), p.448

37 "Memorandum on the comparative treatment of Arabs and Jews" p.3. CO 371/61938

38 "Narrative despatches from the High Commissioner to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, reporting on the situation in Palestine" vol. 1, No. 11, 3 December 1938. CO 935/21

The Jewish Forces

The Jews in Palestine started to build their military force as early as 1909, when Hashomer (the guard) as a secret armed organisation to guard the settlements. This organisation was dissolved in 1920, although some small secret cells remained in operation. In 1929 these cells gave all their arms to the Haganah. The Haganah (the Hebrew organisation for defence in the Land of Israel), or as it was known during the Mandate, (the military secret organisation for the Jews in the land of Israel), was established in 1920 and became the biggest Jewish military organisation.

³⁹ In 1937 the number of members in this organisation reached 35,000 ⁴⁰

British authorities allowed the Jews in the settlements to be armed under the pretext of protecting their settlements and properties from Arab attacks. However in 1936 the Haganah moved its operations from defence to offense, when the Moving Squads were formed, with the task to ambush the Arab rebels. The British army welcomed the operations of the Moving Squads and co-operated with them.

"The British army which was operating in that area [Jerusalem] felt the activities of the Moving Squads, and met some of their members, and sort of a secret agreement was established between the two. As they divided the areas between them to avoid clashing with each other" ⁴¹

In 1936 a Jewish force was formed, named the Jewish Settlement Police. Half of this Force's funds came from the Jewish Agency and the other half was provided by the British Government in Palestine. ⁴² By October 1936, this force numbered 2,863, and almost all its members were from the Haganah. The British army in Palestine admitted that it

³⁹Ahmad Khalifa (Trans.), al-Thawra al-Arabiya al-Kubra Fi Filastin, al-Riwaya al-Isra'iliya al-Rasmiya, Beirut, 1989. p.XXX

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.125.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.77

⁴² David Clark, The Colonial Police. Oxford, 1978, p.148

had benefited greatly from this Force's assistance and advocated its legalisation and made it part of the security forces. ⁴³

By the end of 1937, there were 4,859 Jewish settlement police as well as 967 employed for defending railways and other "guarding" duties. ⁴⁴ In September 1938, the British High Commissioner in Palestine Sir Harold MacMichael reported to the Colonial Secretary that there were about 6,500 Jews already paid and armed by the Government.⁴⁵

"In this year [1938] the military co-operation between the Haganah on one hand and the authorities and the army on the other reached its peak. And the groups of guards which were scattered all over the country became "the Settlement Hebrew Police", which developed quickly in its size and organisation with the development of the event. Until it became a semi military militia, armed with rifles and machine guns, and equipped with armoured vehicles..."⁴⁶

In July 1938 British Intelligence Officer. Captain Orde-Wingate, a pro-Zionist enthusiast, formed the Special Night Squads, highly mobile units which were made up of a small number of regular army soldiers mixed with Jewish settlers whom they had trained. These squads were to attack rebel groups and make raids on villages to terrorise the people not to support the rebels. Wingate joined personally in these attacks and raids and he was wounded during a raid on Dabboriya village in Galilee. ⁴⁷ The task of the Special Night Squads is best explained in the words of Wingate himself:

"The Arabs think that the night belongs to them. Because they alone can fight at this time. The British soldiers and police stay in their camps all night long. But we, the Jews are going to show them [the Arabs] that we can spoil their plans. We are not going to rest or relax until

43 "Report on the military lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936" Headquarters British troops in Palestine and Trans-Jordan. February 1938, p.30. WO 282/6

44 Colonial Note to Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry, Foreign Office and Palestine Government. 16 February 1937, CO 733/317/1

45 A.W. Kayyah, Palestine, A Modern History. p.216

46 Ahmad Khalifa (trans.), al-Thawra al-Arabiya al-Kubra. p.192

47 Ibid. p.342

we make them fear the night more than they fear the day".⁴⁸

There was also co-operation between the Jews and the British in the Intelligence Services, where the Haganah and the Jewish Agencies Arab Bureau supplied the army and the Palestine Police with invaluable information about the rebels, their hiding places and movements. ⁴⁹

In 1939, after the London Conference failed to bring the parties into an agreement and after the British suggested restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine, some of the Zionist organisations started to attack Arabs to terrorise them. For example the National Military Organisation (Etsel), started a campaign of assassination against Arabs. They killed some passers by in Tel Aviv and also threw a grenade in the Old City of Jerusalem killing three Arabs. In Haifa some of the Etsel members exploded a mine in the market place in Haifa, killing 26 Arabs
⁵⁰

The armed Haganah and the Moving Squads led by Wingate, did not stop the revolt. They did however relieve some of the rebels pressure on the British army and police in some areas, such as the area along the Oil Pipe-line, allowing the British to move some of their forces to other areas. It also managed to inflict some casualties among the rebel forces, as well as to terrorise villages which supported the rebels.

Peace Bands

The idea of creating "peace bands" to counter the revolt, to terrorise the villagers to give up their weapons and to arrest rebels, came from Raghīb al-Nashashibi the Head of the Opposition which was led by the al-Nashashibi faction. This was his own small war against the Husseini

48 Ibid. p.345

49 Y. Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.241.

50 Ahmad Khalifa (Tran.), *al-Thawra al-Arabiya al-Kubra*. p.187

faction, and in particular the Mufti. In 1939 there were a number of peace bands in different areas of Palestine, and the one common link between them was that their creators were all supporters of the Nashashibi faction.

Raghib al-Nashashibi started to prepare the peace bands in early December 1937, when the revolt was gaining strength and support from the people and when a campaign of assassinations against the Nashashibi faction had also started. He sent a message to the Jewish Agency asking for financial aid to help him fighting what he called the "terrorists". The Jewish Agency did not respond. According to Y. Porath, Raghib repeated his request three months later, and the Jewish Agency's reply is not known.⁵¹ However, he continued to organise the formation of the peace bands with Fakhri al-Nashashibi, and was supported by anti-Husseini personalities, such as Ahmad al-Shak'ah, Sulaiman Touqan (both fled the country earlier for fear of their lives), and Tahir al-Masri of Nablus.

Fakhri al-Nashashibi contacted Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi of Jenin in Damascus. The latter had left Palestine with al-Qawuqji late 1936 and lived in Syria. At the time when al-Nashashibi met him he was loyal to Prince 'Abdullah of Trans-Jordan. 'Abd al-Hadi agreed to join with al-Nashashibi faction for money paid by the British Consul in Damascus.⁵² Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi entered Palestine in September 1938, to start forming his peace bands in Jenin area, and began to attack villages in an anti-Husseini campaign. The rebel leaders tried to capture him to bring him to trial for treason and his village was besieged by the joint forces of 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, and 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad. But he managed to hide in the secret rooms under his house, and they failed to capture him.⁵³

51 Y. Porath, *Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.251

52 *Ibid.* p.253

53 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985, Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

At the same time Fakhri al-Nashashibi was trying to recruit members for his peace bands in the Southern areas of Jerusalem and Hebron, and began an Anti-Husseini propaganda campaign. On the 30th November 1938, 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq issued a Communique in which he sentenced him to death. ⁵⁴

Money, as in the case of Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, and political and familial rivalry as in the case of the Nashashibi's, were strong enough reasons for them to start peace bands which killed and terrorised many people. However, in some cases personal revenge was the main reason for starting peace bands in other areas. As'ad al-Shuqairi was once the Mufti of the Turkish Fourth Division, later Qadi of Acre, and a Nashashibi sympathiser. He started a peace band in Northern Palestine to avenge the death of his son, who was killed by the rebels. In 1939 he contacted Rabah al-'Awad who was a fasil leader in Northern Galilee area, to form a peace band. In return he received a full amnesty from the British authorities, who were to benefit from his invaluable information on the rebels hiding places, their names and ranks, their movements and plans. Rabah turned his fasil into a peace band and continued to operate in the same area. His peace band helped the British in finding, arresting and disarming many rebels in that area. According to accounts of interviews from the same area, and from Mubadda Farhat who also organised a peace band in Galilee, Rabah was imprisoning the rebels, terrorising the people and extracting money from villagers when they failed to produce the number of rifles he asked them to surrender. ⁵⁵

"Once I was going to another village to find a bride for my cousin. That night I slept in Tarshiha, then the village became under siege, and Rabah al-'Awad came with the

54 See Communique in Appendix F.

55 Mubadda Farhat, personal interview 21/3/1985 Kufur-Yasif, Galilee; Bulus Hanna Bulus, personal interview 20/3/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee; Ibrahim Hanna, personal interview 23/3/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee; Mustafa al-Bakri, personal interview 2/2/1985 al-Be'neh, Galilee and Mohammad Said al-Khatib, personal interview 16/4/1985, Kabul, Galilee

English. He arrested me and put me for two months in Camp Julieh. Rabah, when he started to work with the English stayed in al-Faraj village, and anyone he wants arrested would be brought to al-Faraj”⁵⁶

Rabah himself does not deny these stories:

“I was contacted by As’ad al-Shuqairi to start a peace band to avenge the killing of his son by the rebels. I was offered an amnesty by from the British for that. I stayed in a village, not my village, and I had an army of 65 men to work with me. the British gave me 60 pounds a month. Any rebel who wanted to surrender to me I took to the British. If he was charged with a political crime he would be released, and if he was charged with a criminal offense he would be arrested”.⁵⁷

The accounts of the interviewees do not agree on the reason behind the killing of Dr. Anwar al-Shuqairi, the son of As’ad. Some said that the rebels killed him under suspicion of his being a collaborator.⁵⁸ Others said that he was set up by a jealous Arab police lieutenant from Jenin who suspected a relationship between his wife and the doctor, and forged the doctors signature on some documents containing information on the rebels and sent it to them.⁵⁹ Some think that it was the British who killed Anwar to start fights among the people.⁶⁰

In Jenin area, the rich and affluent Irshid family, in spite of their Nashashibi affiliations were apparently supporting some of the rebels in their area, until the killing of two members of the family, the brothers Ahmad and Mohammad. The family then turned against the revolt and joined forces with Fakhri ’Abd al-Hadi to form peace bands in Jenin area.⁶¹ The Irshid family accused ’Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad of the killing and vowed revenge against him. It is possible, however, that one

56 Raji al-Khatib, personal interview, 22/3/1985, Majad al-Kurum, Galilee

57 Rabah al-’Awad, personal interview, 17/2/1985, al-Mazra’ah, Galilee

58 Hussein Baytam, personal interview 21/2/1985 Abu-Snan, Galilee

59 Mohammad Said al-Khatib, personal interview, 16/4/1985, Kabul, Galilee.

60 Bulus Hanna Bulus, personal interview 20/3/1985 al-Be’neh, Galilee

61 Hussein Badawi, personal interview, 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin and Ibrahim Shehadeh, 8/4/85, Aqqaba, Jenin.

or more of 'Abd al-Rahim followers did the assassinations without his knowledge, as he was known for being against assassinations. (see Chapter 7). The reasons for the killing could have been political or personal. Four interviewees from Jenin area agree that the Irshid brothers were killed for political reasons, as they (Irshids) had good relations with the opposition. All agree also that Ahmad was killed by mistake and that Farid his brother was the one who was to be killed. ⁶²

Farid Irshid, was the head of the Irshid peace bands, and he was the intended target of the assassination. Many of the accounts in Jenin area believe that he not only had led the British to Sanur village which led to the clash with 'Abd al-Rahim and his killing, but they also believe that Farid himself had actually shot 'Abd al-Rahim dead, as he was only wounded by the British.⁶³ Irshid peace bands were as brutal towards the villages populations as Fakhri in Arrabeh village, and as Rabah in Galilee. One who suffered from their brutality recalls:

"Towards the end of the revolt Farid Irshid sent for me to surrender my weapons. We did not have any choice; either we flee the country or we give up our weapons and be safe. I went to his village. He said that he wanted me to get into an army jeep and cover my face and point out the rebels for him. When I refused he imprisoned me in a well for two months, then I was taken to his village again, he gave me with other rebel prisoners, the choice of staying in the prison [the well] or working on his land for free without any payment. This is how bad things could get" ⁶⁴

As the rebels had killed during the revolt some Arabs who were collaborators and informers, and some of those who sold the lands to the Jews or acted as land brokers, some of these persons families also sought revenge by joining the peace bands.

62 Hussein Badawi, and Ibrahim Shehadeh, personal interviews 8/4/1985 Aqqaba; Yusif 'Awad, personal interview, April 1984 Maythalun and Ahmad Nazal, personal interview, 1/4/1985, Qabatya

63 Mohammad al-'Amawi personal interview 2/6/1984, Sanur, Jenin and Adham Jarrar, personal interview 2/6/1984, Sanur, Jenin. Both were eye witnesses to the killing.

64 Ibrahim Shehadeh, personal interview, 8/4/1985 Aqqaba, Jenin.

"Those persons whose relatives were killed because they collaborated with the British, and those persons who hated the revolt and were working with the British, used the opportunity and formed peace bands, which began to take revenge from the real rebels and attack their homes and arrest them. Some of the rebels were taken to Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, some were forced to pay money. the peace bands were following the rebels in the mountains. Fakhri made peace bands and brought the army to stay with him and he started to take revenge upon us. But peace bands were not only in Arrabeh [Fakhri's village]. In every village someone was killed [by the rebels] his relatives joined the peace bands and started to chase the rebels. Some they would arrest for fifteen or twenty days, some they would impose a fine on, and others they would ask them to bring a rifle or a pistol"⁶⁵

The role played by the peace bands against the revolt was similar to that played by the Special Night Squads, in that they were chasing, ambushing and arresting the rebels, as well as terrorising the people from helping the rebels. But the role played by the peace bands was far more effective and did much more damage and harm to the revolt than the Special Night Squads. First, some of the peace bands were formed from ex-rebels, such as Rabah al-'Awad, Mubadda Farhat, and Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi, who had knowledge about the revolt. They knew where the rebels hid, what villages give support, who were the Faz'ah in the villages, who was armed. They knew the rebels' tactics and their meeting places. All this knowledge was used by the British forces as well as by the peace bands themselves to arrest rebels, and disarm men in the villages.

Many, of those who joined the peace bands for personal reasons such as to avenge the death of their relatives, used these bands to kill their enemies, or even to wage small private wars against their rivals. For example many of the old clan rivalries , which were put aside during the revolt, started to come up again and men from one clan would join the peace bands to kill or fight their rivals from another clan who were still with the revolt.

65 Bashir Ahmad Ibrahim, personal interview 15/7/1984, Zeita, Tulkarm.

The peace bans also managed to create confusion among the people, who saw some of the rebels they once respected as fighting for an honourable cause turning into collaborators. Villagers became confused about who to support and who not. Many villages as a result stopped giving support to the rebels at all. Rebel began to turn against rebel, which was far more damaging to the peoples moral. Finally, the peace bands, alongside their terror campaign, started to spread propaganda in which they said that the British are willing to give amnesty to any rebel who surrenders to the peace bands and gives up his arms.

The Leadership Vacuum

The vacuum which was created at the leadership level by the killing or arrest of some of the main leaders of the revolt helped in weakening the revolt. In September 1938 Mohammad al-Salih (Abu-Khalid) was killed in Dair Ghassaneh north west of Ramalla in a British ambush. He had called for a meeting of rebel leaders on the 13th of September in an effort to create a united leadership and mend the conflicts between 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq. By this killing Silat al-Zahir area lost its most prominent leader.⁶⁶ 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini was injured in November 1938 in Bani-Na'im village near Hebron in a clash during which he also lost two of his deputies and sixteen members of his fassil. ⁶⁷ The killing of Issa Battat left the area of Hebron without leadership on a high level. On March 26th 1939, the most prominent leader of the revolt 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad was killed in a clash with the British forces in Sanur village near Jenin and with him died his deputy Sulayman Khalifa. ⁶⁸

66 Hasan Haj Yusif, personal interview, 3/4/1984. Maythalun, Jenin.

67 Akram Zueiter, al-Harakah al-Wataniya. p.388

68 Ibrahim Shehadeh, personal interview, 8/4/1985 Aqqaba, Jenin.

The killing of the Commander in Chief, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, dealt the revolt received a severe blow. He was coming to Palestine from a meeting in Damascus with the Central Committee where the continuation of the revolt after the publication of the White Paper was discussed. The revolt had more setbacks, with the surrender of 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq and 16 of his men to the French authorities on the Syrian borders on the 13th April 1939. This and the killing of 'Abd al-Rahim created a complete vacuum of leadership at high level in Tulkarm area. ⁶⁹ In July 1939, Abu-Durra was arrested on the Trans-Jordan borders by the Arab Legion forces, who in turn handed him over to the British authorities in Palestine. He was tried and convicted of murdering a man from Rummaneh village near Jenin and was hanged in 1940. ⁷⁰ The killing of 'Abd al-Rahim especially, and the surrender of 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq affected the moral of the rebels very badly. Ahmad Mohammad al-Hasan from Burqa near Nablus assumed command, replacing 'Abd al-Rahim. In spite of the Central Committee's efforts to boost the morale by announcing that al-Hasan had taken the command, and would continue with the revolt, this in fact had done very little to change the situation. al-Hasan lacked the charismatic personality and the connections which 'Abd al-Rahim possessed and he subsequently failed in his task. The situation in Palestine was irreversible. ⁷¹

In mid 1939, French authorities in Syria began a campaign against the Palestinian activists there, and began to arrest and deport many of them. ⁷² In his letter to Akram Zueiter, Wasif Kamal described this campaign as a policy adopted by the French to aid the British to finish the revolt:

"The French are following the Palestinians in an irritating way, and arresting them, and after a few days

69 Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.588

70 Mohammad Jarradat, personal interview 4/2/1985, *Silat al-Harithiya*, Jenin.

71 A letter from Mamdouh al-Sukhn to Akram Zueiter, in *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. p.604

72 "Monthly Reports on Trans-Jordan" July 1939, p.13 and October 1939, p.3, FO 371/23246

arrest they order them to leave the country. Yesterday the Maidan area was searched, and fifteen men were arrested, among them was Sheikh Ahmad al-Tubah... Maybe the basis for this new French policy was laid down in the meeting between the French army commander and the British General commander in Palestine when the former visited the latter."⁷³

This campaign by the French authorities made it very difficult for the supplies of arms and ammunition to reach Palestine, which subsequently made the rebels in shortage of arms and ammunition.

Internal Problems

Added to the many outside pressures which the revolt had to stand against, internally there were some weaknesses also. These included organisational problems, lack of co-ordination with the political leadership outside Palestine, excesses in the behaviour of some of the rebels, and internal assassinations. But it is important also to note that these internal problems on their own would not have ended the revolt.

On the organisational level, the lack of a control body which could co-ordinate the different leaders in the different areas was the most apparent weakness. Although the Bureau of the Arab Revolt in Palestine was formed in the Summer of 1938 as an attempt to unite the different rebel groups together under one united leadership, the rebel leaders themselves who were members of the Bureau remained independent in their areas and operated independently. Besides the only rebel leaders who joined the Bureau were those in the central areas of Palestine. 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini in the South for example did not join the Bureau, nor did Khalil Mohammad Issa (Abu-Ibrahim al-Kabir) of the northern area. Both of these leaders preferred to maintain their contact with the Central Committee in Damascus independently and also to operate

⁷³ As quoted in Akram Zueiter, *al-Haraka al-Wataniya*. pp.600-601

independently. The Bureau had little control if any over the rebel groups, beyond distributing finance and arms and ammunition. Nor did it have any control over the operations and practices of any of the leader members of the Bureau. Perhaps the most difficulty the Bureau faced, which subsequently diminished its control, was the fact that each of the leaders was operating in his own area depending on the network of alliances and relations which his clan or village formed. This provided the leaders with most what they needed in terms of protection, men, food, shelter, as well as prestige. Combined with this was the existing rivalry between some of the leading members of the Bureau, which paralysed its ability to take decisions, let alone to execute. Such was the rivalry between 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, which almost developed in some cases into clashes between the supporters of the two leaders (see below).

At another level, the rudimentary hierarchical structure in the rebel groups did not help each leader to have full control of his followers. The undefined distribution of authority among the Regional Commanders, Sub-regional Commanders and fasil leaders often created an overlap in their responsibilities which made it difficult for each leader to maintain all his activities and practices. In addition each of these sub-division Commanders was also operating in his own area, which made it difficult for the leader to keep full control over all of the areas under his command. Together the lack of a centralised body and of a clear hierarchical structure within the rebel groups made it very difficult to maintain a unified strategy for operations. Thus, each leader decided his own strategy and passed orders through his Regional Commanders to those who were lower in ranks to execute it. In the end the fasil leaders were the ones who would usually implement most of the plans.

However, it is unfair and incorrect to assume that the revolt failed because of this lack of organisation. Each fasil leader Sub-regional

Commander or regional commander up to the leader, was operating in his own area, in an environment and territories known to him, and using his own clans alliances which were necessary for the successes of their operations. In fact they had succeeded in bringing most of Palestine under their control in 1938 using these methods and without a centralised strategy. But if they had a centralised body and a clear strategy they could have kept most of the country under their control for a longer period, which would have subsequently put them and the political leadership into a better bargaining position during the London Conference.in 1939

The relationship between the rebel leaders in Palestine and the political leadership in exile embodied in the Central Committee for the Jihad in Damascus was also not clearly defined. On the one hand, it appears that the political leadership exercised some control over the rebel leaders, in sending arms and finances, in some cases to the extent of sending orders to rebel leaders to assassinate some of their rivals. (see below). But on the other hand the rebel leaders were independent in their areas and in planning and executing their operations. However, this independence indicates that there was no definite strategy made by the politicians in Damascus, for the rebel leaders to execute. This lack of political direction led in some areas to excesses on the part of some of the rebels, who used the revolt to achieve personal goals. Perhaps the most obvious example of these excesses was the collection of money in the name of the revolt without the knowledge or the authorisation of its leaders.⁷⁴ One of the reasons behind the conflict between 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, was that the latter's men were extracting money from the people in the name of the revolt.⁷⁵ Abu-Durra

74 Ibrahim Hanna, personal interview, 23/1/1985, al-Be'neh, Galilee.

75 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm.

was perhaps the best known leader to have misused the revolt for his own ends.

"Abu-Durra wanted to marry a girl from our village. Her brother and the rest of the family were against this marriage, Abu-Durra said that he will marry her against the will of her family, which he did. And he also sent some people to kill her brother. Fortunately they did not succeed in killing him".⁷⁶

The excesses in behaviour by some of the rebels were also affected by their leaders. For example, it was known that the rebels working with Mohammad al-Salih (Abu-Khalid) behaved best towards the people, in contrast to those who worked with 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq or Abu-Durra. Because Abu-Khalid was himself an honest man and was careful not to allow any misbehaviour from his men. In contrast to both 'Arif and Abu-Durra.

Assassinations, whether for political or personal reasons, were not firmly controlled by the rebel leaders. Besides assassinations for personal or clan revenge, many were conducted on political background, often by orders from some political leaders of the Husseini faction. Political assassinations were of two motives, first against those who supported the opposition faction, such as the killing of 'Abd al-Salam al-Barqawi from Burqa near Nablus, as he was known to have been one of the strong Nashashibi supporters. He was killed in a campaign against those who had agreed to the partition plan in 1937. The others who were listed for murder in Jenin area were Farid and Mohammad Irshid (the latter was assassinated), and Mohammad Mas'ud Jarrar who had managed to escape to Cyprus.⁷⁷ The killing of 'Abbas al-Fahum of Nazareth for the same reasons, (agreeing to partition plan) and the killing of Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani of Jerusalem.

⁷⁶ Fawzi Jarradat, personal interview, 4/2/1985, Silat al-Harithyah, Jenin.

⁷⁷ Ahmad Nazal, personal interview 1/4/1984, Qabatiya, Jenin. and Hussein Badawi, personal interview 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin.

During the revolt, there were no statements issued by the political leadership in exile against political assassinations of anti-Husseini personalities. This indicates that this leadership in general and the Mufti in particular was in fact in favour of such a method of dealing with their political rivals. ⁷⁸ In her book, al-Hout quotes a comment by Kamil al-Dajani, a close associate of the Mufti, regarding a visit from Dr. 'Omar Khalil, a delegate from Haifa, to ask the Mufti to issue a statement saying that the killing of an Arab was a crime. This meeting took place in September 1938, but he did not succeed in convincing the Mufti to order such a statement al-Dajani commented on that:

"There was no request to the Mufti to prohibit assassinations as far as I know. However, in my view if he was asked to do so, he would refuse."⁷⁹

The other motive of political assassinations was the killing of collaborators and land sellers and land brokers. Many groups and individuals were involved in this kind of assassination during the revolt and the political leadership in Damascus approved of this kind of assassination. In an interview Jamal al-Husseini, the head of the Arab Party, admits the responsibility of this kind of assassination:

"We admit our responsibility, and we made these assassinations in the first place to stop land sales after all the peaceful means had failed. We are responsible for thirty or forty deaths. Among those killed was a cousin of mine whom we had advised but he refused to take our advice. We had to send someone to kill him at his front door".⁸⁰

The Qassamits were also involved in killing collaborators in Haifa and lower Galilee areas, such as the of Halim Basta and Ahmad Naif who were working with the Police and were involved in following the Qassamits.⁸¹ All of these assassinations helped to create confusion among the Arab population which in turn led some people to mistrust the revolt

78 Maurice Pearlman, Mufti of Jerusalem, London, 1947, pp.25-33.

79. Bayan al-Hout, al-Qiyadat Wa al-Mu'assasat. p.403.

80 Ibid. p403

81 Samih Hamoudeh, al-Wa'i Wa al-Thawra. pp.117-9.

and led others to work against it, especially those who lost relatives as a result of these assassinations.

The relations and conflicts between some of the rebel leaders was reflected in the inter fasil relations. For example the conflict and rivalry between 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, reflected on the relations between the fasail belonging to each of them, which in some cases had almost developed into a fight, like the incident between a fasil belonged to 'Abd al-Rahim and another belonged to 'Arif who almost clashed in Jaffa for territorial domination, and which could have led to a full scale clash between the forces of each of the leaders had some notables and some people from Jaffa not intervened to stop the clash before developing. ⁸²

The conflict between these two leaders goes back to the rivalry between the families of the two, who were competing on positions and prestige in the area of Tulkarm. However, this developed during the revolt into a rivalry between the two leaders. This rivalry was reflected in the competition between them to head the Bureau of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, which was supposed to rotate between the members. 'Abd al-Rahim assumed the title of "Commander-in-Chief of the Revolt", which he modified in late 1938 to "Commander-in-Chief of the Arab Rebels in Palestine". 'Arif on the other hand found it difficult to agree with 'Abd al-Rahim on the title and decided to call himself "Commander-in-Chief of the Rebels in Southern Syria." The rivalry between the two during the revolt took a political form, especially when 'Abd al-Rahim denounced Arif's willingness to commit political assassinations, and extracting money from the people. ⁸³

82 Shakir Milhim, personal interview, 6/4/1985 Dhinnabah, Tulkarm and Faisal 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, personal interviews 2/2/1985 and 20/4/1985 al-Taybah, Triangle.

83 Shakir Milhim, personal interview. 6/4/1985. Dhinnabah. Tulkarm.

This conflict reached its peak when 'Arif killed Farid al-Hamdallah, a relative of 'Abd al-Rahim, after accusing him of giving information to the authorities. As a result clashes occurred between the groups of the two leaders, but which 'Abd al-Rahim contained and prevented from spreading, in spite of the fact that a third party (British or Jews) tried to deepen the conflict by attacking both rivals to make it appear as though one was attacking the other. ⁸⁴

Other factors

The Arab Countries, with the exception of Syria and Lebanon did nothing to support the Revolt. Syria and Lebanon were allowing arms through their borders, as well as hosting the exiled leadership and many of the Syrian activists who were helping to collect and organise finances for the revolt. Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia did not give the rebels any support, except for the support from some Iraqi Nationalists. The Governments of these countries especially Saudi Arabia and Iraq, were actually trying to help the British in calming down the situation in Palestine.(see details of their role in Chapter 4).

In Trans-Jordan the situation was more complicated. The Jordanian nationalists helped the rebels to get arms and ammunition through the borders while Prince Abdullah was supporting the Nashashibi faction. In fact some of the Palestinian leaders were in favour of starting the revolt in Trans-Jordan. The Mufti was one of those. However, the leaders of the revolt inside were not in favour of this action. ⁸⁵ there were some incidents in Trans-Jordan where violence was reported, but the Jordanian Frontier Forces lead by Sir John Glubb had stopped them. ⁸⁶

84 Y. Porath, *Palestinian Arab National Movement*. p.246

85 "monthly report on the administration of the Trans-Jordan deserts", April 1939, p.14, FO 371/23246

86 Sir John Glubb, Personal interview, 11/5/1983, Mayfield, Sussex.

According to Glubb Pasha, the revolt in Trans-Jordan did not succeed because the Trans-Jordanians were not discontented with the British rule so they did not support the revolt:

"The only direct involvement I had ... was that the Palestinians wished to make a Rebellion in Jordan. Trans-Jordan if you like - with the idea of drawing off the British army from Palestine to suppress a rebellion in Jordan and so, gangs of these people come into Ajloun, that area. But, of course, guerrilla depend upon the support of the people, and so the Arabs of Palestine were discontented and they did not want to support guerrillas and so the attempt to raise a rebellion in Jordan failed".⁸⁷

Islamic communities further afield, especially in India, were not interested in helping their brothers in Palestine as the Mufti hoped and the British feared. As for the western world, especially Germany, there was no interest in the Middle East at that time to threaten seriously the British interests in the region, in spite of the fact that the Mufti himself visited Germany and asked for arms.⁸⁸ In fact most of the world was indifferent to the Arab revolt in Palestine, and the small Information Centre which was established in London by pro-Arab Britons, administered by a few pro-Mufti Palestinians.⁸⁹ had very little impact on the British Public.

The Revolt finally died out in the first few months of the Second World War. The casualties on the side of the Arabs were 5000 killed, and on the British side 300 killed.⁹⁰

87 Ibid.

88 Francis R. Nicosia, The Third Reich. London, 1985, pp.194-201

89 Frances E. Newton, Fifty years in Palestine. London, 1948, pp.281-282

90 "Memorandum on the comparative treatment of Arabs and Jews" p.2, FO 371/61938

Factors that ended the revolt as seen by the different classes

It is interesting to note that the different classes in Palestine saw the reasons behind the end of the revolt in different terms. The class of notables, believed that the main factors which ended the revolt were the dispersal of the leadership outside Palestine. This reflects the fact, first, that they believed the revolt was the making of the leading notable classes, and secondly that day disregarded the role of the peasants. There was also a tendency to put the blame on others, such as the British, as in the following explanation by a notable from al-Husseini family:

"The dispersal of the leadership outside of Palestine, the revolt here and the leadership outside. The British tried to create conflicts between the Arabs, they used to hire men to kill some personalities. For example the British murdered Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani and accused the Husseinis of it. And also they assassinated Fakhri al-Nashashibi and accused the Husseinis"⁹¹

The other view was to blame the rebels themselves, as ignorant murderers, which reflects a very clear class stand.

"The main reason, was personal killings. Honest people were killed, and their families took revenge on the revolt. Our problem was that our leaders were ignorant, felahin [peasants]. what was Abu-Durra? A worker"⁹²

The rebels themselves had a different view as to why the revolt stooped.

"It failed because it was weak. I mean that if I worked with the revolt, I have children, they want to eat, if I don't support them they will die of starvation. I need wages, but there are no wages, that means failure, we used to buy our own ammunition, to sell some of our crops to buy them, sell our oil to buy a rifle. That means failure"⁹³

The peasant rebels also view the reasons for end of the revolt from a class point of view.

91 Salah al-Din al-Husseini, personal interview June 1985, 'Iyn-Synia, Ramallah

92 Shawqi al-'Abbushi. (Big land owner and a government official) personal interview 27/10/1985, Jenin.

93 Mohammad Said al-Khatib, a fasil leader. Personal interview. 16/4/1985, Kabul, Galilee.

"If you want the truth, all the rich were traitors. They betrayed us, and they surrendered the country [to the Jews]"⁹⁴

"all those rich ones were not straight, and we never respected them. Because they were collaborators with the English. They did not want the revolt".⁹⁵

However, the middle class radicals who also fought in the revolt were more able to give an analysis, rather than blaming the rich or poor classes.

"The revolt was unable to achieve independence, first, because there was no balance between the fighting forces; the British were larger numbers. Secondly, there was no balance in the armament, between the arms we used, and the arms of the British Empire forces. Third, the British were helped by the Arab rulers: against the revolt. Trans-Jordan, the Pasha the Commander of the Jordanian Army, used to put his forces near Irbid, to fight against Palestinian rebels if they moved to Syria. He used to arrest the relatives of any Jordanian who joined the revolt. Fourth, The British used to open new roads and pay the workers handsome money to prevent them from joining the revolt. The Palestinian delegates used to go to Saudi Arabia to bring arms, and they came back with only few guns. Fifth, the British policy was formed and clear, and it had a plan, that it would not give up easily to the Palestinian revolt. I don't agree with those who says that the revolt failed. Some believed that the revolt would achieve independence, but those are the ones who felt that the revolt had failed. The others, of which also our organisation belongs, believed that the revolt was a violent protest against Colonialism and Zionism. And to make the other Arab Countries aware of the dangers of the Zionist policy".⁹⁶

94 Mohammad Naji al-Kaylani, a peasant fighter. Personal interview, 12/1/1985, Ya'bad, Jenin.

95 Ahmad Nazal, Fasil leader. personal interview 1/4/1984, Qabatiya, Jenin.

96 Bahjat Abu-Gharbiya, personal interview, 5/5/1985, Amman, Jordan.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the process of building the infra-structure of the Jewish national home in Palestine during the 1920's and 1930's, the Palestinian Arab economy suffered from many serious setbacks. Jewish immigration brought about a rapid and unbalanced growth of population and caused the unemployment rate among Arab workers to rise to an alarming level. The Jewish purchase of Arab land caused thousands of Arab peasants to become landless, as well as led to the decrease in cultivable land available to Arab peasants. Consequently, a big number of these peasants sought jobs in the towns. It is not surprising therefore, that from the ranks of those workers and peasants, came the most majority of recruits for al-Qassam's movement calling for armed struggle. Also, it is not surprising that the main centers of the revolt were found near Jewish settlements where the purchase of lands was most intense.

The inability of the Arab industry to compete with the well-funded, skilled and mechanised Jewish industry led among other factors to the former's decline. Furthermore, some of the Mandate government's economic measures furthered the decline of the Arab economic section.

The economic and political effects of the process of building the Jewish national home were felt by all social classes of Arab society in Palestine. The urban elites perceived the Jewish urban based industry and trade as a direct threat to their economic interests. They also saw in this process a threat to their political interests as their hopes to become the statesmen of a future independent Arab Palestine were diminishing.

However, the policy adopted by these elites to face this threat was not forceful enough to combat the threat posed by Zionist colonisation. Since the first institutionalised political action embodied in the Muslim-Christian Associations and the formation of the political parties in the early thirties, until the general strike in April 1936, the political elite leadership adopted a policy of complaints and protests, sending numerous delegations to London to dissuade the British from supporting the Jewish national home.

The uprisings of 1921, 1923, 1929 and 1933 proved that the policy adopted by this political elite was futile and did not lead to the achievement of any of the national demand, namely the independence of Palestine as an Arab state, the stopping of Jewish immigration and land purchase. These uprisings especially that of 1929, were also alarming signs to both the British authorities and the political elites that the latter could lose their control over the masses, the thing which almost occurred in the early days of the general strike in 1936 had the political elite not joined in. These events however, led to the emergence of some political parties such as the Independence party led by politically radical middle class urban members. The indirect opposition against these parties from the traditional leadership such as Haj Amin al-Husseini on the one hand, and the inability of these parties to work among the peasants and workers led them to dissolve themselves. Nonetheless, their members continued to be active in political life and played an important role during the general strike as well as during the revolt.

However, it was movements such as that of sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam which prepared the grounds for the revolt. This movement which became known to the public in 1935, came as an alternative grass-roots movement comprising mainly peasants and workers. It combined religious and national ideologies, and adopting the armed struggle as an alternative means of struggle.

The Arabs of Palestine became increasingly afraid of the alarming increase in the number of Jewish immigrants in the 1930's, and in the discovery of a shipment of arms to the Jews. This, combined with the accumulation of Arab grievances, made the Arab population of Palestine ready for a general strike which would last for six months and an armed revolt which would last for three years.

The overwhelming majority of the rebel forces were peasants who suffered from the Jewish national home, and their livelihood was threatened. The revolt lasted for three years and fell into three phases, the first lasting from April 1936 with the general strike to the arrival of the Royal Commission of Inquiry. During this stage the rebels attacked Jewish settlements and sabotaged government installations. The Arab rulers interfered to end the strike and to stop rebel operations.

The second stage started after the publication of the report of the Royal Commission in July 1937, and lasted to the autumn of 1938. During this period the operations of the rebels escalated, and the rebels in the summer of 1938 gained control over most of the countryside as well as some towns including Jerusalem.

The third stage lasted from the autumn of 1938 to the summer of 1939 when the revolt stopped. During this period the British sought to crush the revolt both by force and by political and diplomatic manoeuvres. There were also internal problems, attacks by the Peace Bands, formed by the Opposition to counter the revolt, and the killing or arrest of some of the most important leaders of the revolt. All these reasons and the approaching Second World War helped combine to bring the revolt to an end.

The oral data used in this thesis helped to shed more light on the period of the revolt. The accounts of the rebels came to confirm some of the findings of other documented accounts of the period, for example, the peasants were the overwhelming majority of the rebels and as a

result the character of the revolt reflected their influence and their modes of mobilisation. The oral accounts gave more details on some of the events and the inside story about some of the revolt's internal affairs, such as their organisation, administration, rebel courts as well as some insight into some of the internal problems and conflicts. The oral accounts of the rebels provided an important addition to the documented accounts of the period by giving the peasant's points of view, often neglected in the official histories written either by their colonisers (the British and the Israelis) or by their Palestinian elites (memoirs and accounts).

For this thesis, these oral accounts helped to draw a few important conclusions. Firstly, the role of the Palestinian Arab peasants in the revolt was bigger and much more important than portrayed in most of the documented accounts. Secondly, the relations between the members of the rebel forces and their relations with their clans on the one hand and their relations with the notable families and the elite leadership on the other, were much more complicated and entangled than the simplistic descriptions suggested in prevailing accounts. Rebel alliances for example were not only governed by clan interests but in some instances they implied class and social interests, for example, the alliances between peasants and workers. In other cases not all members of a given clan necessarily supported the same political faction, for example, Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi towards the end of the revolt became anti-Husseini and formed a Peace Band in the Jenin area to counter the revolt, while 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi was a pro-Husseini faction throughout the revolt.

The relations between the rebels and the notable families give yet another example of the complicated relations during the revolt. Although the rebels in their communiques adopted the same political stand as the political elite leadership, they maintained a relationship of mutual interests which enabled the rebels to get financial support and supplies,

but at the same time in some of their legislation and actions a class connotation could be traced. The rebels charged a very high taxation on some of the rich families, especially those which were known to support the Opposition. In some of their economic legislation the rebels clearly took the side of the peasants, for example, the ban on lenders collecting peasant's debts, or the legislation which banned landlords from collecting the rents on flats rented by workers and poorer towns folks. Thirdly, although the rebels did not have an articulated ideology or strategy on which to base their actions, operations or forms of mobilisations, they nonetheless had common national, political and economic objectives which bound them together albeit, not in an ideologically coherent movement. They did have interests of their own but at the same time they did share common ground with the political elites, namely the struggle against the common threat embodied in Zionist colonisation. However, it is revealed through the oral accounts that the rebels were more clear and explicit in identifying their main enemies. The elite political leadership did not have any articulated policy towards the British. They were generally friendly towards them but in more radical situations, made protests and sent delegations to London, they hoped to dissuade the British from supporting the Jewish national home. The rebels, on the other hand, were very clear about where they stood towards the British and directed the majority of their operations against them.

Fourth, despite the lack of a coherent ideology, the lack of a unified leadership, and the existence of a very rudimentary hierarchical order of rebel ranks, the revolt nonetheless, was much more organised than suggested by most of the prevailing accounts of the revolt. This was born out by the fact that the rebel had their own administrative system, courts system, laws and legislations, an intelligence network and even their own stamps. At one point during the revolt they were able to gain control over

almost all the countryside as well as some of the towns and forcing the British forces to re-occupy Palestine in 1938.

The rebels were not mere common bandits, or scores of outlaws who were seeking their own interests, but rather they were rebels with national, political and economic common objectives. This proves also that the revolt was not merely an internal clan wars over territories or power as was suggested in some of the historical accounts of the period. The fact that the rebels used their clans, and their clan alliances reflects the social structure of the revolt and its peasant character.

Finally, despite the fact that the revolt of 1936-39 did not achieve the national aims of gaining independence or stopping the Jewish immigration or their purchase of Arab lands, it was, however, the most important factor which led the British to give some concessions to the Palestinian Arabs in the White Paper. This suggested the restrictions of Jewish immigration and land sales, and granted the independence of Palestine within a ten year period. However, the outbreak of the Second World War. and the outbreak of Jewish violence in the 1940's did not allow the achievement of the White Paper to come to put into practice.

Although the Palestinians themselves do not agree whether the revolt was a failure or a success, and despite the disagreement among the different historical accounts as to whether to call it a revolt, a rebellion, a revolution or even bandits wars, the revolt of 1936-19939 remains in the history of the Palestinian people, the first organised grass-roots armed struggle against colonisation, and a first step in a struggle which continues today after fifty-four years. There are still many facts to be revealed about this period of the Palestinian history and many lessons remained to be learned.

APPENDIX A

NAMES OF REBEL LEADERS

GC General Commander
 RC Regional Commander
 SRC Sub-Regional Commander
 FL Fasil Leader

| NAME | PLACE OF ORIGIN | AREA OF OPERATION | BACKGROUND INFORMATION | RANK | COMMENTS |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|------|---------------|
| 'Abbás, Kaiyd | Kabúl | Galilee | | FL | |
| 'Abd al-'Aziz, Mohammed | Silwád | South | | FL | |
| 'Abd al-Ghani, Mohammad Said | Nahaf | Galilee | | SRC | |
| 'Abd al-Hádi, 'Abd al-Qádir al-Yúsuf | 'Arrábah | Central | | SRC | Head of Rebel |

| | | | | | | Central Court |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|
| 'Abd al-Hádi, Fakhri | 'Arrábah | Central | Big Land Owner | G | | |
| 'Abd al-Kháliq, Yúsuf | Indór | Galilee | | SRC | | |
| 'Abd al-Páziq, 'Arif (Abu Faisal) | al-Taybah | Central | | GC | | |
| 'Abduh, Diya' | Nablus | Central | | SRC | Member of Rebel | |
| | | | | | | Court |
| 'Abuh, Said | Hebron | South | | SRC | | |
| 'Amofuri, Ibráhím (Abú Jásir) | Irtáh | Central | | FL | | |
| 'Anabtáwi, 'Abd al-Rahím Mahmud | 'Anabta | Central | Head of An-Najah School | FL | Adviser to 'Abd | |
| 'Arafah, Sheikh 'Abd al-Hayy | Hebron | South | | FL | Jihad Muqaddas | |
| 'Attallah, 'Ali Ismá'il | Gaza | South | | FL | | |
| 'Awad, Sheikh 'Atyáh Ahmad | Balad al-Sheikh | Galilee | | GC | Qassamite | |
| 'Awidah, Khalíl | Gaza | South | | FL | | |
| 'Ukshiyah, 'Ali Mohammad | Gaza | South | | FL | | |
| Abú 'Ali, Sulaimán | Simsim (Gaza) | Galilee | Worker in Haifa | SRC | Qassamite | |
| Abú al-'Adas, Mohammad (al-Matshah) | Jerusalem | South | | FL | | |
| Abú al-Déeb, Majdhúb | 'Anqa | Galilee | | FL | | |
| Abú al-Fillát, 'Abd al-Mu'ti | Jerusalem | South | | PC | | |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------|--|
| Abú Tabíkh, Jábír (al-Llawzí) | Khirbat al-Llawz | South | FL |
| Abú Fáyi', Mohammad | Haifa | Galilee | FL |
| Abú Zayd, Sheikh Náji | Haifa | Galilee | FL |
| Abú, J'ib, Mahmoud | Qabatiyah | Central | FL |
| Ahmad, Taha Mohammad | Jalqamús | Central | FL |
| al-'Abd, Rashid | Majd al-Kurím | Galilee | FL |
| al-'Abd, Sheikh 'Abd al-Fattáh (Abú 'Abdullah) | Silat al-Zahir | Central | CC |
| al-'Ashi, Fáis | Jenin | Central | SRC |
| al-'Ass, Saíd | Syrian | South | PC |
| | | | Came with Qawujji and died in 1936 in |
| | | | al-Khadir, Bethlehem |
| al-'Awad, Rabáh | al-Ghabsiyah | Galilee | SRC |
| al-'Azzóni, Fáris (Abú Ma'rúf) | 'Azzón | Central | SRC |
| al-Agha, 'Abd Salfim | Khan Yúmis | South | FL |
| al-Agha, Mohammad | Tarshiha | Galilee | SRC |
| al-Ahmad, Shiháb | al-Mawasi Tribe, Tiberias | Galilee | FL |
| al-As'ad, 'Abdullah (Abú Shaddád) | 'Attíl | Central | SRC |
| al-Asbah, 'Abdullah | al-Ja'úneh | Galilee | SRC |
| | | Worker | |
| | | | Bedouin |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|---|-----|
| al-Ashhab, 'Abd | Hebron | South | Shop owner | FL |
| al-Ashmar, Sheikh Mohammad | Syrian | Central | | RC |
| al-Austa, Mustafa | Nablus | Central | | FL |
| al-Bairúti, 'Abdulla | 'Aqraba | Central | | FL |
| al-Bakr, 'Abdullah (Abú Bakr) | Burqa | Central | Teacher | RC |
| al-Baytam, Faiyád | al-Kuwikát | Galilee | | FL |
| al-Diyáb, Mustafa | al-Sawa'd Tribe, Tiberias | Galilee | | FL |
| al-Dúkhi, Salih | Nahaf | Galilee | | FL |
| al-Fáris, 'Ali | Um al-Fahm | Central | | RC |
| al-Haj, Fáiz Mohammad | Um al-Fahm | Central | | FL |
| al-Hamdán, 'Abd al-Rahím 'Ali | Dhinnábah | Central | | SRC |
| | | | Responsible for supplies and intelligence | |
| al-Hamdán, Sheikh 'Arif | al-Mansi | Galilee | | SRC |
| al-Hamdán, Yúsuf | Um al-Fahm | Central | | RC |
| al-Fattáb, Kamil | Far'úm | Central | | FL |
| al-Eoráni, Dawood | Jenin | Central | | SRC |
| al-Eusari, Nimr | Nablus | South | | SRC |
| | | | Asst. to Abu Durra | |
| | | | Asst. to Abu Durra | |
| | | | Responsible for supplies and intelligence | |
| | | | Qassamite | SRC |
| | | | Asst. to Abu Durra | RC |
| | | | | FL |
| | | | | SRC |
| | | | Adviser to Hasan | SRC |

| | | | | | | Salamah |
|---|-------------------------|----------|--|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| al-Husseini, 'Abd al-Qádir | Jerusalem | South | | | | GC |
| al-Husseini, Fahmi | Gaza | South | | | | SRC |
| al-Husseini, Hamdi | Gaza | South | | | | SRC Member of National Committee |
| al-Ibráhím Mohammad | al-Halb Tribe, Tiberias | Gallilee | | | | FL Bedouin |
| al-Ibrahim, 'Arif | Kufr Ra'i | Gallilee | | | Worker in Haifa | FL Qassamite |
| al-Ibráhím, Mahmoud | Deir al-Qasi | Gallilee | | | | FL |
| al-Ibráhím, Tawfiq (Abú Ibráhím al-Saghír) | Indór | Gallilee | | | Cigarette Seller in Nazareth | SRC Qassamite |
| al-Ja'ouni, Akram | Jerusalem | South | | | | SRC Rebel Adviser |
| al-Jalqamúsi, Mohammad al-Ahmad (Abú Hashim) | Jalqamús | Central | | | | SRC |
| al-Jamál, Tawfiq | al-Bassah | Gallilee | | | | FL |
| al-Jashi, Sheikh Yúnis | Sumáta | Gallilee | | | | FL |
| al-Judah, Mohammad | al-Berweh | Gallilee | | | | FL |
| al-Júlání, 'Abd al-Halím (Abú Zaydán, Abú shalaf) | Hebron | South | | | Was a porter then a shop owner | RC |
| al-Khadir, Sheikh Mahmoud (Abú Khadir) | Eaifa | Gallilee | | | Worker in Haifa | SRC Qassamite |
| al-Khaiyr, Dalil Said | al-Kábri | Gallilee | | | | FL |
| al-Khatib, Mohammad al-Mustafa (Hijázi) | Tarra | Gallilee | | | | FL |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---------|---------------------|
| al-Khatib, Mohammad Said | Kabúl | Galilee | FL |
| al-Khatib, Páji | Sha'ab | Galilee | FL |
| al-Khatib, Riyad | Nahaf | Galilee | FL |
| al-Kurdi, Mahmud 'Othman | Kufr Bur'um | Galilee | FL |
| al-Mádi, Sabri | al-Sindiyanah | Central | FL |
| al-Mahmoud, Salih | al-Hujairát Tribe, Shafa 'Amr | Galilee | FL Bedouin |
| al-Makhzúmi, Mahmud Salim (Abú Ahmad) | Zir'in | Galilee | SPC Qassamite |
| al-Mazr'áwi, Sheikh 'Abd al-Fattáh Mohammad | al-Mazr'ah | South | SPC Qassamite |
| al-Mazra'áwi, Ahmad | al-Mazra'ah Ramallah | Galilee | SPC Qassamite |
| al-Muslih, Sheikh Náif | Saffúriah | Galilee | FL Qassamite |
| al-Nabulsi, Dr. Hamdi (al-Tajji) | Jaffa | Central | SPC Adviser to 'Abd |
| | | | al-Rahim |
| al-Nabulsi, Faisal | Nablus | Central | SPC Adviser to 'Abd |
| | | | al-Rahim |
| al-Najjár, Sheikh Mohammad Tahah | Yebnah | South | FL |
| al-Nimr, Ibráhim | al-Hujairát Tribe, Shafa 'Amr | Galilee | FL Bedouin |
| al-Nubáni, Mohammad Onar (Abú Shawkat) | Mazari' al-Nubáni | South | SPC |
| al-Qadah, Said | Kufr Manda | Galilee | FL |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------|-----|---------------------------------|
| al-Qásim, Hussein Mahmoud | al-Hilf Tribe, Shafa 'Amr | Galilee | FL | Bedouin |
| al-Qásim, Mahmoud Ahmad (al-Diráwi) | Deir Abú D'if | Central | SRC | |
| al-Qassís, Sa'úd | al-Malha | South | FL | |
| al-Qawuqji, Fawz al-Din | Syria | Central | GC | |
| al-Qutub, Sheikh Shakib | Nablus | South | SRC | |
| al-Pádi, Hussein | Rumánah | Central | SRC | |
| al-Rantisi, As'ad 'Abdullah | Rantis | South | FL | |
| al-Rashid, Fawzi | Tarshiha | Galilee | FL | |
| al-Rímáwi, 'Ahid | Beit Rima | South | FL | |
| al-Sa'di, 'As'ad Khalil | al-Mazár | Central | SRC | Asst. to Farhan al-Sa'di |
| al-Sa'di, Sheikh Farhan | Núris | Central | GC | Qassamite |
| al-Sádiq, 'Abd al-Qédir | 'Attíl | Central | FL | |
| al-Safúri, Mohammad (al-Ghuzlán) (Abú Mahmud) | Safúriyah | Galilee | RC | Qassamite |
| al-Salih, 'Abd al-Pahmán | Sialt al-Zahir | Central | GC | Qassamite |
| al-Salih, 'Abdullah | Dhinnábah | South | FL | Responsible for Intelligence |
| al-Salih, Mahmoud Salim (Abú 'Atif) | Arroúqah | Galilee | SRC | Qassamite |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---------|-----|---|
| al-Salih, Mohammad (Abu Khalid) | Silat al-Zahir | Central | GC | Qassamite |
| al-Sha'ir, 'Abdullah | Safad | Galilee | FL | |
| al-Sha'ir, Rashid | Safad | Galilee | FL | |
| al-Shawa, 'Adel | Gaza | South | FL | |
| al-Shtaiwi, Mahmoud | Samakh | Galilee | FL | |
| al-Sukhn, Mandouh | Nablus | Central | SRC | Teacher at An-Najah School Adviser to 'Abd al-Rahim |
| al-Sulaiman, Turki Khalil | Beita | Central | FL | |
| al-Taha, 'Abdullah | Sialt al-Zahir | Central | FL | |
| al-Taji, Hikmat | Jaffa | South | SRC | Adviser to Hasan Salamah |
| al-Tubah, Ahmad (Abu Ghazi) | Safuriyah | Galilee | SRC | Qassamite |
| al-Zu'bi, Sheikh Naif | Solun | Galilee | SRC | He was the head of Zu'bi family |
| Almaza, Nimr | al-Bassah | Galilee | FL | |
| Baraymah, Mohammad Isma'il | Kufr al-Ibad | Central | FL | |
| Barham, Surur | Haifa | Galilee | SRC | Worker in Haifa Qassamite |
| Battat, Issa | al-Dhahriyah | South | RC | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---------|---|
| Bisher, al-'Abd | Majd al-Kurún | Galilee | SRC |
| Bishr, Ahmad | Majad al-Kurún | Galilee | FL |
| Bsiso, Fáyiq | Gaza | South | FL |
| Búlus, Búlus Hanna | al-Be'neh | Galilee | FL Expert in Arms |
| Darwish, Ahmad | al-Zééb | Galilee | FL |
| Dawood, Sheikh Sulaimán | Tur'án | Galilee | FL |
| Diwán, Sheikh Deeb | al-Yajúr | Galilee | FL |
| Doshan, 'Imrán | al-Majdal | South | FL |
| Eliás, Ibráhím Hanna (Abú Hanna) | al-Be'neh | Galilee | FL |
| Farhát, Mubaddá | Majd al-Kurún | Galilee | FL Peace Band Member |
| Ghaith, Dawood | Jerusalem | South | FL |
| Ghumaym, 'Aríf | Safad | Galilee | FL One of the Leaders of 1929 Uprising |
| Halím, 'Ali Jásim | Iraq | Central | SRC Came with Qawuqji |
| Hamad, Fu'ád | 'Ayn al-Zaitún | Galilee | FL |
| Hamádah, Amin Miflieh 'Ali | Shafa 'Amr | Galilee | FL |
| Hamádah, Anís | Tarshiha | Galilee | FL |
| Hawásh, Yehiya | al-Berweh | Galilee | SRC |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|---------|----|--------------------------|
| Hussein, Hasan Nimr | al-Hujairát Tribe, Shafa 'Amr | Galilee | FL | Bedouin |
| Ibráhím, Ahmad 'Ali | Tarshiha | Galilee | FL | |
| Ibtálí, Salim (al-Haj) | Qalqilya | Central | FL | Rebel Court Judge |
| Issa, Khalíl Mohammad (Abú Ibráhím al-Kabír) | Shafa 'Amr | Galilee | GC | Qassamite |
| Jarrár, Fawzi | Sanúr | Central | PC | |
| Kaiyed, Mahmoud (Abú 'Adel) | al-Safsáf | Galilee | FL | |
| Kalboúnah, Ahmad | Nablus | Central | FL | Military Adviser |
| Kamál, Wásif | Nablus | Central | FL | Adviser to 'Abd al-Pahlm |
| Khalíl, Nimr | Sha'ab | Galilee | FL | |
| Khaláiyah, Salih ('Ayyóush) | Sakhnín | Galilee | FL | |
| Khalíl, Salim Hasan al-Haj | Lifta | South | FL | |
| Mansúr, Salih | 'Arrabat al-Battoúf | Galilee | FL | |
| Mar'i, Mohammad Isma'íl | Halhoúl | South | FL | |
| Mardáwi, 'Abd al-Hamid | Marda | Central | FL | |
| Mash'al, 'Abdullah | Sharafát | South | FL | |
| Mazr'áwi, Farid Said | al-Mazr'ah al-Sharqiyah | South | FL | |
| Mohammad, 'Abd al-Pahlm al-Haj (Abú Kanál) | Dhinnábah | Central | GC | Grain Merchant |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------|----|-------------------|
| Mohammadiyah, Khalil | Bethlehem | South | FL | Qassanite |
| Muhanna, 'Abdullah Mustafa | al-Masniyah | South | FL | |
| Muhawish, Yassin | al-Damin | Galilee | FL | |
| Musa, Sheikh Mohammad 'Abduh | Kawkab Abu al-Haiya | Galilee | FL | |
| Musallim, Salim al-Sheikh | Dora, Hebron | South | FL | |
| Mushtaha, Tawfiq | Gaza | South | FL | |
| Nassar, Ibrahim 'Abd al-Hadi | 'Anabta | Central | FL | |
| Nazal, Ahmad | Qabatiyah | Central | FL | |
| Qataniyah, 'Awad al-Haj Hasan | Qatanah | South | FL | |
| Sa'b, Hamad | Lebanon | Central | PC | Came with Qawuqji |
| Said, Mahmud | Deir al-Asad | Galilee | FL | |
| Salamah, Hasan | Qibyah | South | GC | |
| Salim, Mohammad | Safuriyah | Galilee | FL | |
| Salim, Said (Beit Iba) | Beit Iba | Central | FL | |
| Shatat, Mohammad Said | al-Mazra'h | Galilee | FL | |
| Shqair, Said | Betunia | South | FL | |
| Shraim, Shihdah | Falhoul | South | FL | |
| Taba, Ahmad al-Husseini | Mi'ar | Galilee | FL | |

| Member of National Committee | FL | South | Hammámah | FL | Member of National Committee |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------|----------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Tbaish, Mohammad | FL | South | Hammámah | FL | Member of National Committee |
| Wafá, Jad'óim | FL | Galilee | al-Judaydah | FL | Druze |
| Ya'ish, Farid | FL | Central | Nablus | FL | Rebel adviser |
| Yássín, Ahmad al-Haj | FL | Galilee | Safad | FL | |
| Yássín, al-Haj Hasan | SPC | Central | Dhinnábah | SPC | Responsible for supplies |
| Yássín, Mohammad | SPC | South | Pantis | SPC | |
| Za'rúrah, 'Ali Ibráhím | FL | Galilee | Safúriyah | FL | Qassamite |
| Za'rúrah, Ahmad 'Abd al-Qádir | FL | Galilee | Safúriyah | FL | Qassamite |
| Zaidán, 'Abd al-Rahmán | SPC | Central | Deir al-Ghusúm | SPC | |
| Zaqzúq, Ahmad Mohammad | FL | Central | Siris | FL | |
| Zawáta, Hamad | RC | Central | Zawáta | RC | |

APPENDIX B.I.

Names of the men who left Haifa with al-Qassam*

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>PLACE OF ORIGIN</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Abû-Durra, Yûsuf | Silat al-Harithyah |
| 2. Ahmad, Dawood al-Shiekh | Beita |
| 3. As'ad, Salih | Safûriyeh |
| 4. Badawi, Arabi | Qabalân, Nablus |
| 5. al-Bâyer, Hasan | Burqiî, Jenin |
| 6. Hassan, Ahmad al-Haj 'Abd al-Rahmân | 'Anbta, Tûlkarm |
| 7. al-Husseïn, As'ad Mifleh | Um al-Fahm |
| 8. Jâbir, Ma'rûf al-Haj | Ya'bad |
| 9. Khaîlaf, Mohammad Abû Qâsim | Halhoûl, Hebron living in Hifa |
| 10. Khaîlîl, al-Haj Ahmad | Unknown |
| 11. Khattâb, Dawood | al-Kabâbîr, near Hifa |
| 12. al-Masri, 'Atîfa Ahmad | Egyptian lived in Hifa |
| 13. al-Sa'di, Nimr | Shefa 'Amr |
| 14. Salim, Mahmoud | Living in Zir'în, Jenin |
| 15. Yûsuf, Mohammad | Solum, Jenin |
| 16. al-Zîbâwi, Yûsuf 'Abdullah | al-Zeib, Galilee |

* These names were from the recollection of Arabi Badawi, he dose not recall the other three men who left Haifa with al-Qassam. He is quite sure however, that there were 19 men. Arabi Badawi, personal interview, 23/5/1984, Qabalan, Nablus. Tape recorded.

APPENDIX B.II

The names of the men who were in Ya'bad and clashed
with the British forces in November 1935**

1. Badawi, Arabi
2. al-Bâyer, Hasan
3. Hassan, Ahmad al-Haj 'Abd al-Rahmân
4. al-Husseïn, As'ad Mifleh
5. al-Masri, 'Atîfa Ahmad
6. al-Qassâm, Shiekh Izz al-Dîn
7. al-Sa'di, Nimr
8. Yûsuf, Mohammad
9. al-Zîbâwi, Yûsuf 'Abdullah

** Arabi Badawi, personal interview, 23/5/1984, Qabalan, Nablus. and Sami al-Ahmad, personal interview, 26/12/1983, Jenin.

APPENDIX C

Two songs composed by British police in Palestine on the rebels*

- A. When the golden sun sink in the hills,
and we climb to our eyrie once more.
So that all the night through,
we can have pot shots at you.
Just as we have done before.
Down the the road where all the convoys come,
they will find we shall cause them unrest,
as we blaze away,
in our pretty way,
from a boulder upon the hill crest.
There are tips we can give to the troops.
When it comes to laying landmines,
and in derailing too,
we know what to do,
to make the trains run off the lines.
we can lay down a gelignite fuse,
we can loosen the fishplates and then
with, a wrench and a twist
two sections are missed
and up goes the old train again.
- B. Aref had a little mare
Its coat as white as snow
and where that mare and Aref went
we're jiggered if we know.

* Edward Horne, A Job Well Done. Essex, 1982, p.229

APPENDIX D

A translation from Arabic of a court case which was published in a communique by the General Commander of the Arab Revolt in Palestine - 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, of a trial of a Jewish engineer who was captured by one of the rebel fasa'il:

"The Mujahedin of al-Zilzal fasil have captured on Haifa-Jaffa road, the Jewish engineer Jisho Daphne, and a trial set up by the fasil court on the 18/8/1938, he was sentenced to death by shooting. He was given the right to appeal. His appeal was brought to the Revolt's Supreme Court, which is embodied by the General Commander and its War Chiefs of Staff. After listening to his testimony and the testimony of a lot of witnesses, the court decided the following:

- (1) As many trusted Arab witnesses were in his favour.**
- (2) As he did not admit in believing in the Zionist idea which we hate and fight against.**
- (3) As his killing will be disastrous and painful to his children**
- (4) And as the Court will take its guidance from the famous Arab saying "give forgiveness when you are able (when you are strong)"**
- (5) And as the Court considers him as a prisoner who should not be harmed.**

"For all these facts and indications the Court has passed this verdict:

- (1) Free the prisoner and refuse to take the ransom he offered to pay which was £P 1000, to prove that the revolt is for higher goals and above materialism.**
- (2) Give the prisoner five pounds from the revolt money, and give him western clothes, and send him safely to his home.**
- (3) To ask the Committee for publication to publish this judgement and its details for the public to know that the Arabs are noble people in all of their actions."**

* Communique by the General Command of the Arab Revolt in Palestine. On the 26th of Jamadi the Second 1357 (The Year of Muslim Era). August 1938.

APPENDIX E I

20/9/1933

-COPY.

NOTICE FROM ARAB REBELS HEADQUARTERS IN PALESTINE
TO CREDITORS VISITING VILLAGES.

In view of the economic crisis in the present position of the fellah during this agricultural season and the heavy burden lying on their shoulders, certain creditors in towns who look after their personal interests only have begun to visit the villages pressing the debtors to settle their accounts.

Due to these reasons attention is being drawn to the following points:-

1. Creditors are warned not to visit villages or send their agents to ask for settlement of debts.

2. Any person who takes legal steps against his debtor will be held responsible for his actions. It was also ascertained by the rebel leaders in Palestine that there are certain persons in various towns and villages who are still acting as agents and landbrokers for Jews, forgetting the bad situation prevailing in the country, a fact that compels the rebels to swear terrible vengeance against these people.

During such terrible times when the country is being flooded with hundreds of victims and hundreds of martyrs convicted to death and hanged, such traitors commit land brokerage, thinking that they are beyond the reach of the rebels forgetting the Koran which says "wherever you are death will follow you." Notwithstanding they conceal themselves in high towers.

After these facts were proved by the leaders, this warning was sent out as the first and last one, requesting the people to avoid any of the above actions.

The Public Leader of the Arab Rebels in Palestine

(Signed) Abd El Rahim El Haj Mohamad.

APPENDIX E II

COPY.

General Command Headquarters of the Arab Revolution
in Palestine. Date 21 Jamady '35 (18/8/38)

In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate
Declaration to the noble Arab people.

It is repeatedly brought to our notice that some persons of low character, in the name of the Arab Command, beg and forcibly dispossess people of their personal property. The Arab Command emphatically condemns this despicable action to which it is no party.

The Arab Command has already published a notice prohibiting this and we now renew the warning to such offenders who waylay and burden the inhabitants and merchants with these despicable demands and deceive in the name of the Arab Command which is above polluting the name of revolution with such meanness.

The Legislative Committee attached to the Command have drawn up the following orders for the purpose of putting a stop to such actions:

(1) Every person of whatever occupation has to report to the Arab Command the name or names of persons who make demands of any nature and the Arab Command authorises whoever is approached for money or other valuables, to arrest the perpetrator or perpetrators of such offences and deliver them to the Command for investigation and necessary action.

(2) Any person proved to have committed such theft and deceit in the name of the Command will be sentenced by the Revolutionary Court for high treason.

(3) The minimum punishment for such crimes after trial is the severance of the hand, the offender being considered a thief.

(4) No demands should be acceded to if the requestor is not in possession of a document bearing the personal signature of the Commander-in-Chief. A seal with no signature should be considered invalid and a forgery.

(5) Any person who does not help in the execution of this order will be considered as obstructing the revolutionary movement, and will receive special punishment.

(6) This order shall come into force after the approval of the Command, and upon publication

Legislative Committee

The Command has approved the Order presented by the Legislative Committee

The Mujahid

(Signed) Abdul Rahim Haj Mohamed.

APPENDIX E III

20/9/1938

COPY

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL.

The Noble Arab Public is hereby notified that, because of the current economic crisis which presses all classes of the people, the following has been ordained:-

1. A moratorium on debts will be effective from Sept.1,1938 indefinitely.
2. Actions of Courts and Collections in respect to debts will be discontinued.
3. Everyone who contravenes will be arrested and taken to the strongholds of the Wyahedeen, the bearers of the promises of freedom and independence and will be fined LP.50. and will be flogged for the first time.
4. At the repetition of the offence, the creditor will be executed merely at the complaint of the debtor who must produce two righteous witnesses to prove that he has been pressed by his creditor.
5. Anyone who removes this notice will be severely punished. There are everywhere observing eyes. He who has given warning is not blame. Please be with the righteous.

The Mijahid for the sake of God
and the Holy Fatherland.

(Signed) Saadee-Din El Bashir.

الحكم بالاعدام على

فخرى الناشبي

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
ذو اعدوا لهم ما استطعتم من قوة،
(المدل اساس اللك)

ديوان الثورة العربية الكبرى
سوريا الجنوبية - فلسطين
الرقم ١٠٩-٣٨
التاريخ ٨-١٠-٥٧
٣٨-١١-٣٠

الى الراى العام

من خرج على الامة وهي جمع، تقتلوه بانسب كاتا من كان

(حديث شريف)

لما كان فخرى الناشبي عضو حزب الدفاع قد رالى الاهداء بمذكرة التي تناولت فيها حقوق البلاد، وادعى ما ليس له حق الاهداء، والما خرج على اجماع الامة، واتفق مع الساعة الانكليزية والاسبانية، فبينما، تلك ديوان الثورة العربية الكبرى بتبره مرتكبة، لجرم الحياة الوطني وبتقرر الحكم عليه بالاعدام ويبيع دمه وماله .
وعلى كل عربي ان يتخذ هذا الحكم ان اسنطاع اليه سيلا .
وكذلك يسلن ديوان الثورة العربية الكبرى ابنا انه يبيع دم وماله كل مشايخ
افخرى الناشبي لخروجه على اجماع الامة .
واتمنى الوطنية لا تتسامح مع الناصر بن والداسين ، والوطن فوق الجميع .
وقد اعذرتمن انذر .

التوكل على الله : عارف عبد الرزاق

APPENDIX G

Revolt Leaders, Background Information:

'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad:

'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad was born in 1892 in Dhinnabah village near Tulkarm. Until the revolt, he was a grain merchant and farmer. His first education was in the village Kuttab (the village mosque where the sheikh taught the children reading and writing and the Quran). This was followed by schooling in Tulkarm. Later he joined the Turkish army. When the First World War ended in 1918 he went back to his village where he worked in trading in Tulkarm.

During the six month strike in 1936, 'Abd al-Rahim organised a group of men and began operating against the British, as a result he soon became a wanted man. When al-Qawuqji came to Palestine in the summer of 1936, 'Abd al-Rahim joined forces and worked closely with him.

The number of his forces rose constantly during 1937. He was appointed general commander of the revolt during Deir Ghassaneh conference in the summer of 1938.

'Abd al-Rahim was the most respected of the revolt leaders, known to have been honest, and did not believe in killing or assassinating his rivals, or even collaborators. His relationship with the mufti and the Central Committee were good. He visited Damascuss often for arms and supplies, and to discuss the progress of the revolt. Except at one time a

conflict developed between him and some members of the Central Committee as a result of his refusal to commit assassination on the Huseini faction behalf, it was solved however, when he visited Damascuss early in 1939.

In March 1939, on his way back from Damascuss, he stopped at Sannur village near Jenin with two of his regional commanders close associates and a small force of rebels. The British authorities were informed of his presence through collaborators. Sannur village was put under siege, and 'Abd al-Rahim and one of his regional commanders were killed in the clash which took place in that day.*

'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq:

'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq was born in 1900, in al-Taybah village near Tulkarm. He was schooled in Nablus until completing his secondary education.

He inherited a large parcel of land from his father and worked as a farmer and merchant.

In the early Twenties he formed al-Kaff al-Aswad (The Black Palm), with a few men from his village and those of neighbouring

***Sources:**

- Kamal 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, personal interview 4/4/1985, Tulkarm
- Shakir milhim, his personal assistant, personal interview 6/6/1985, Dhinnabah, Tulkarm
- Kamal yassin, personal interview, 23/7/1984, Tulkarm
- Mohammad 'Amawi, personal interview, 2/6/1984, Sannur, Jenin, eye witness to the killing
- Adham Jarrar, personal interview, 2/6/1984, Sannur, Jenin, eye witness, Sulaiman khalifa, 'Abd al-Rahim's deputy was killed in his house.
- Ziad 'Odeh, 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, Batal Wa Thawra. al-Wakala al-'Arabiya lil Tawzi' Wa al-Nashr, al-Zarqa', Jordan, 1984

villages. Their purpose was to attack the Jewish settlements and sabotage the crops.

In the early Thirties, he formed a second group known as the Mohammadian Scout Group. One of its tasks was to ground the beaches against possible, illegal infiltration by Jewish immigrants. In 1933, 'Arif joined Hizb Mou'tamar al-Shabab al-'Arabi (the Conference of the Arab Youth Party), which was established in Jaffa.

Along with other local leaders, 'Arif joined al-Qawuqji in 1936, leaving Palestine with him in that year, from Jordan. He soon returned, however, and began to recruit, organise and prepare for second phase of the revolt in 1937. By 1938, 'Arif had established control over a large area in the centre and to the south of Palestine.

In 1938, he was accused of the killing of Hassan Sudqi al-Dajani, a well-known figure in Jerusalem. Dajani was with the opposition to the Mufti, and was considered a good supporter of the revolt. According to Faisal, 'Arif's son (who denies his father's involvement in the killing), the accusation affected relations between 'Arif and the Mufti. The Mufti wanted to rid themselves of the opposition and blamed the revolt leaders for it.

Again, in 1938, when the revolt was spreading fast to all of Palestine, the rebels had the upper hand in many areas. A conflict developed between 'Arif and Abd al-Rahim concerning overlapping areas under the control of each. It also involved other, less important matters, such as each supporting his respective Fasil commander in any disputes.

These conflicts and disagreements were discussed in the Deir Ghassaneh conference, and both, along with the other three leaders became members of the general command of the revolt.

In April, 1939, almost one month after the death of 'Abd al-Rahim, 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq and 16 of his men surrendered to the French authorities in Syria. He was treated as a political refugee.

He later went to Iraq and joined the revolt which was led by Rashid A'li al-Kilani. He never returned to Palestine.*

Yusuf Said Abu Durra:

Just as those who remember the revolt agree that 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad was an honest leader - clean and firm; so too is there agreement that Abu Durra was the opposite.

Abu Durra was born in al-Silah al-Harithiya, near Jenin, to one of the biggest families in the area of Jaradat. He, however, was from the poorer and less prestigious part of the family. He was illiterate and was employed as a worker with the railway in Hifa. There, he met Sheikh al-Qassam and joined his mujahidin as a messenger. Thus, he called himself Sheikh.

Abu Durra became a leader in 1937, following the death of Sheikh 'Atiyah in the al-Yamoun battle near Jenin. Sheikh 'Atiyah was also a Qassamite. The order to appoint Abu Durra came from the Central Committee in Damascus.

He had control over the area from Jenin to Haifa, and many of the Druze in that area joined with him. His Fasil commander and regional commander had fought the most successful battles in the Jenin and Haifa areas. These included the battle of Um al-Fahm, which was led by Yusuf al-Hamdan, one of the most respected regional commanders of Abu Durra's forces; and the battle of Um al-Zinat, led by Abu Durra himself.

*Sources

- Faisal 'Abd al-Raziq, personal interview, 2/2/1985, and 20/4/1985, al-Taybah, Triangle.
- Kayed Balu'm, personal interview, 22/4/1985, al-Taybah, Triangle. He was one of 'Arif's guards.

Many remember Abu Durra as the killer of Mukhtars (village heads), because he believed the Mukhtars were the most likely to collaborate with the British.

In July, 1939, while returning from Syria to Palestine, through Trans-Jordan, Abu Durra was arrested by the Trans-Jordan forces. He was imprisoned, later handed to the British authorities and eventually hanged.*

Mohammad al-Salih (known as Abu Khalid):

mohammad al-Salih was from Silat al-Zahir, between Jenin and Nablus. He commanded the village between the two towns. Abu Khalid was closer to 'Abd al-Rahim Haj Mohammad, and played a role in solving the conflict between the latter and 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq.

He was one of the five leaders in the general command of the revolt. He was killed on 20 September 1938, immediately after a leaders' conference. His cousin 'Abd al-Fattah Mohammad (Abu Abdullah) took his place.*

*** Sources:**

- Mohammad Jaradat, personal interview 4/2/1985, al-Silat al-Harithyah, Jenin
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- Ibrahim Qasim, personal interview, 27/10/1985, Musmus.

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- Hassen Yusuf, personal interview, 4/4/1984, Maythalun, Jenin
- 'Abdul 'Aziz Shamalia, personal interview, 30/5/1984, Silat al-Zahir
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Hasan Salameh:

From the Qulieh village in the Ramleh area, Hasan Salameh was a commander of the Southern areas, between Jaffa, Lydda and Ramleh. He was allied with 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq. He was also a member of the General Command. In October, 1939, at the end of the revolt, he went to Iraq.**

- Hussin Badawi, personal interview, 8/4/1985, Aqqaba, Jenin

**** Sources**

- 'Abd al-Rahman Rantisi, personal interview, 4/3/1985, Ramallah
- Mohammad Wadi, personal interview, May, 1985, Amman
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PALESTINE

before 1948
showing Arab villages

- Arab village
- market village
- TOWN

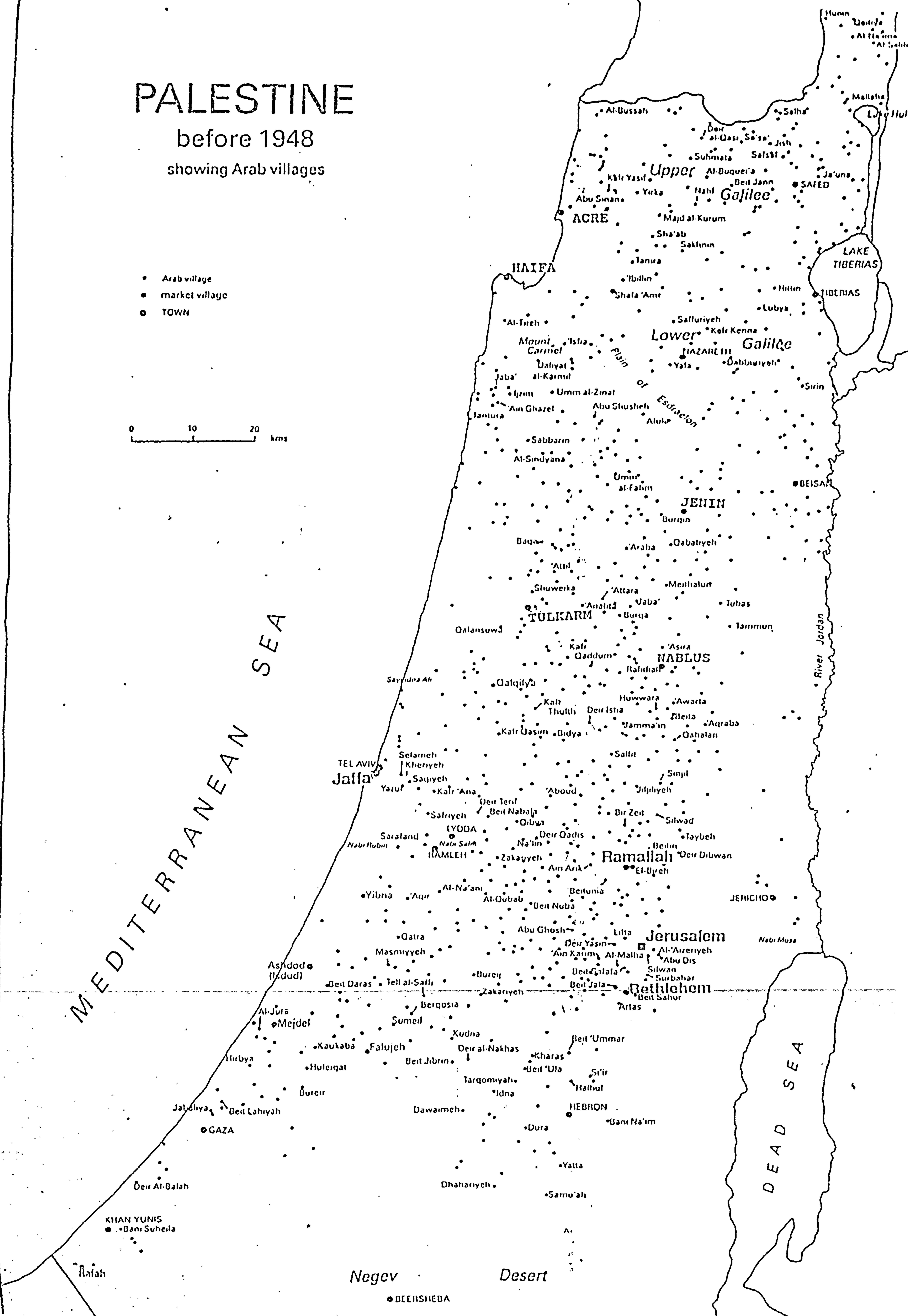


MEDITERRANEAN SEA

DEAD SEA

Negev

Desert



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